4

The Jesuit Collegiate Foundations of the Collegio Romano, the Seminario Romano, and the German-Hungarian College

Although the pictorial cycles at the Novitiate of S. Andrea al Quirinale were among the most innovative and original of the entire Jesuit enterprise in Rome, the fresco programs of the Jesuit collegiate institutions, painted between 1565 and 1608, were the most influential. Scholars have long recognized the debt owed by post-Tridentine iconography to the paintings that adorned the walls of the collegiate chapels of S. Apollinare, S. Stefano Rotondo, S. Tommaso di Canterbury, the Collegio Romano, and the Seminario Romano, including the first large-scale martyrdom cycles in Italy. These painted cycles had their most powerful impact on the Palaeochristian Revival movement, especially the commissions of the Oratorian Cesare Baronio and of Pope Clement VIII; and they were echoed in anti-Protestant illustrated books of the late sixteenth and of the first half of the seventeenth century, printed primarily under Jesuit auspices in Antwerp and Rome, some of which reproduced entire collegiate fresco cycles within a year or two of their completion. But contrary to what most scholars have maintained, the struggle against heresy was not the only inspiration behind these frescoes, and in most cases not even the greatest. It is true that some of the cycles, especially at S. Tommaso, spoke of the urgency of the spiritual battle that had engulfed Northern Europe and England, since they were directed specifically at men training to join the front lines in the North. But unlike the Novitiate frescoes, the collegiate cycles were directed not primarily at young Jesuits ready to commit their lives for the faith, but at non-Jesuits. The colleges were not Jesuit seminaries, but schools for laymen and diocesan priests. Even the Jesuit-run Seminario Romano was a diocesan training ground. Few recognize this important distinction.

The scholarship has treated the collegiate chapel paintings, especially at S. Stefano and S. Tommaso, as the paradigm for 'Counter-Reformation' imagery and therefore has exaggerated not only their anti-Protestantism, but their role as 'propaganda,' with all that term's sinister twentieth-century associations.[1] Just as the Catholic reform movement in general was not as fixated on the Reformation as is popularly maintained, neither were the Jesuit collegiate murals exclusively promoting an anti-heretical message.[2] More important was the desire to link present-day Catholicism with the early Church; the frescoes were concerned with celebrating the role of Rome and the papacy as the legitimate and historical centre of Catholicism, and the inheritor of the glory of antiquity. This Roman message, boosted by

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references to Roman triumphal processions and victories, is mostly glossed over in studies of the frescoes' connection with heresy. Even though the Protestants may have inspired the idea of the martyrdom cycle, as we will see in chapter 5, the theme of martyrdom itself was extraordinarily popular in Palaeochristian times; it was its connection with the early Church that gave it such appeal for sixteenth-century churchmen, not its usefulness in the campaign against Protestantism. The frescoes also identify emphatically with the landscape of the classical and medieval world, including places as distant as Africa and Asia, and exhibit an interest in geography that recalls the interest in the worldwide mission of the Novitiate frescoes. In addition, although the collegiate frescoes are well known for featuring some of the most gruesome scenes of torture and death ever achieved in Italian art – John Paoletti and Gary Radke call them 'almost journalistic' – they share with the Novitiate cycles an unmistakable message of Christian triumph.[3] Their central idea, as Alexandra Herz has indicated, was to depict martyrdom and death not for their own sakes but as the means to salvation.[4] Together with this theme is the christological emphasis as at S. Andrea: the martyrdoms echo the passion of Christ and model the taking up of one's cross to follow the Saviour into spiritual battle – whether literal or metaphorical.

Many of the collegiate fresco cycles also share the Novitiate paintings' link with Jerónimo Nadal's *Evangelicae historiae imagines*, but the connection here is more direct (see figs 12, 13).[5] The basic architectural and landscape setting, the division of the scene into three or more separate fields, and the composition of the figures are very close to those of the illustrations in Nadal – at least in the frescoes that survive. So is the generic classicism of the scenery and costume and the universal sense of place. The most important link, however, is in the key letters. As we will see, the collegiate church murals were among the first in Italy to feature letters in the image that were keyed to explanatory text below. This emphatically didactic method of presentation, so akin to the Jesuits' program of education and meditation in the colleges, either inspired or was inspired by Nadal's manual. In either case, when the Nadal illustrations were published in 1593 they exposed that method to the widest possible audience, and it reappeared frequently in later Jesuit publications such as emblem books.

The collegiate frescoes were also similar to the Novitiate paintings in that they were meant to be used. They were pitched toward a specific program of liturgy, study, and meditation that was related to the students' course of studies and to their future pastoral or charitable work. Scholars have drawn connections between the paintings and the *Spiritual Exercises*, the Roman Breviary, and the Litany of the Saints, as well as hymns, psalms, and scripture. The imagery also has links with the learning methods of the *Ratio Studiorum*, the program of study used in the Jesuit colleges (see chapter 1), and was meant to function as a memory aid for meditation, based on classical artificial memory techniques. The collegiate chapel frescoes also shared themes and iconographies with the paintings in the Novitiate. Such an affinity is not surprising given that Jesuits lived at the colleges and students from the colleges often went to the Novitiate to make the Exercises. Some of the collegiate frescoes also shared artists with the Novitiate, including Fiammeri

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and Clemente. But the main difference between the collegiate paintings and those of the Novitiate is that the former were meant for a wider, more public audience and were therefore mostly the work of professional painters.[6]

The collegiate institutions in this chapter include the Collegio Romano, the original buildings of which still stand on the Piazza Collegio Romano, and the Seminario Romano, which was housed in several different locations in the sixteenth century and was moved in 1608 to its home on the Via del Seminario Romano. Nothing survives of their sixteenth-century decoration except textual descriptions. The bulk of this chapter will be concerned with the various properties belonging to the German-Hungarian College, including the college buildings and the church of S. Apollinare, located just north of the Piazza Navona on the Piazza S. Apollinare. This structure was razed and rebuilt in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although the painting cycle of S. Apollinare survives completely in printed form. The chapter will also consider the German-Hungarian College's satellite churches, beginning with S. Saba on the Aventine Hill, the Palaeochristian Revival apse frescoes of which have been preserved to this day, and, most important, another early Christian church, S. Stefano Rotondo on the nearby Caelian Hill, the decorations of which are by far the most significant of all the Jesuits' collegiate commissions, and have fortunately survived not only in the original but in printed form as well.

Jesuit Teaching and a Brief History of the Roman Collegiate Institutions

Teaching was the central ministry of the Society of Jesus.[7] The first teaching order in the Catholic church, the Jesuits made the founding, management, and staffing of schools one of their most characteristic activities, even if they did not start out that way. Ignatius and his early followers, although students at the University of Paris, never intended to be anything more than an order of itinerant catechists and preachers, with an early interest in missionary work. It was only in the late 1540s that the Society began to take on teaching responsibilities, having seen 'the benefits of labors sustained with the same group of people over a long period of time.'[8] The Jesuits received their first college unexpectedly, when in 1547 the viceroy of Sicily through the citizens of Messina invited Ignatius to start a college in that city and staff it with Jesuits.[9] Other schools followed, in Sicily and then in Vienna and Rome, and by Ignatius's death in 1556 the Society was already running about thirty schools, a number that would increase to over eight hundred by 1773.[10] In the North, particularly Flanders and Germany, the schools played a special role as the vanguard against Protestantism, a goal emphasized by Ignatius himself, who wrote, 'The best means to help the Church in this distress would be to multiply the colleges and schools of the Society in many regions, especially where it is thought that there will be a concourse of students.'[11] This goal, however, did not keep the Jesuits from accepting Protestant students, whom they treated with remarkable equality. The earliest schools were secondary schools, but beginning with the Roman College, the Collegio Romano, many were raised to the status of universities. Jerónimo Nadal was particularly connected with Jesuit

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education from the start. The founder and first director of the Messina school, Nadal went on to supervise colleges in Greater Germany and elsewhere in Northern Europe, and he spent most of his adult life drafting curricula.

The curriculum of studies at Jesuit colleges was not standardized until the generalate of Claudio Acquaviva in 1599, when the *Ratio Studiorum*, the comprehensive guide John W. O'Malley calls the 'Magna Carta of Jesuit education,' was published by Antonio Possevino (1593).[12] Differing from the study guides of other orders in that it addressed lay as well as Jesuit students, the *Ratio* was infused with humanistic learning, so that subjects such as literature, history, and drama were added to the traditional subjects of philosophy and theology. The *Ratio* demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to 'secular' literature, the literature of antiquity, and it gave the students a knowledge of Latin and Greek writers such as Pliny, Virgil, and Cicero, a classical foundation evident in the erudite literary references embedded in the infirmary murals in the Novitiate. The *Ratio* was more structured than the mainstream Latin curriculum of the day and introduced a more systematic and chronological progression of classes according to ability and age, a sequential structure that is also reminiscent of the Novitiate paintings.[13]

By 1551 the basic program of the colleges had been established. Students were encouraged to go to confession either every month or every two weeks, assisted daily at the celebration of the mass, listened to homilies on Sundays and feast days as well as to other moral instruction, attended vespers on those same days, and practised a daily examination of conscience.[14] Before long, students were invited or even required to make part of the Spiritual Exercises, with the result that Ignatius's manual became a focal and familiar element in every young man's education. Students were also encouraged to take part in charitable works of mercy with the Jesuits, and after 1563 the Marian congregations, a kind of confraternity, were introduced in Jesuit schools. In the German-Hungarian College older students were assigned to instruct younger ones in matters of spirituality and to act as role models for their younger brethren. Jesuit colleges soon became the locus of more extravagant and public spectacles. In 1553 the Collegio Romano opened its academic year with disputations on philosophy, theology, and rhetoric that were attended by some of the most important churchmen and nobles of Rome.[15] By 1555 this spectacle had come to last eight days and to include subjects such as humane letters and the 'arts' (logic, ethics, physics, mathematics, metaphysics); it became 'a popular entertainment for the Roman intelligentsia.'[16]

Another tradition that gained wider audiences for the colleges was that of the so-called *affixiones*, public exhibitions of epigrams, letters, orations, emblems, and visual poems written by the students, which were displayed in the college courtyard, usually attached (hence the name) to drapery or tapestries.[17] These exhibitions formed part of the students' training in emblematics, a pedagogical method widely employed by the Jesuits in their colleges, and a hint of which appears in the Novitiate infirmary paintings with their allegories and captioning.[18] One of the earliest took place in 1561, when Philip II's ambassador Francesco Varga and Carlo Borromeo visited the Collegio Romano and were 'greeted by an extraordinary number of poetical compositions in various languages which, written on large folios, were affixed to the walls.'[19] A similar display greeted the Father

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General when he visited in 1581 and encountered 'so many verses and emblems adorning the upper and lower corridors.'[20] Paulette Choné has recently published a manuscript emblem book of 1585 from the college of Verdun in France that features brightly-coloured emblems with Latin and Greek inscriptions of the sort that would have been made at the Roman colleges, and elsewhere I have discussed similar exhibitions at the Jesuit colleges in Japan in the 1590s.[21] Jesuit emblems were works of art in themselves, and related to similar images in Jesuit printed emblem books.

One aspect of Jesuit college life that has received new attention in the work of Louise Rice is the thesis defence, an elaborate production paid for by the defending student's family or patron and involving not just his formal rhetorical speech but also music, illustrated broadsheets or booklets, and other embellishments such as expensive floral arrangements.[22] Some of the earliest publications of the Collegio Romano press, in 1556, were thesis booklets.[23] Illustrated thesis prints became popular from the early seventeenth century, and Jesuit teachers were responsible for many of their designs, which also manifested a love for erudite emblematica based on ancient texts and on Sacred Scripture. Especially at the Collegio Romano, these events were designed as a way of attracting rich and influential patrons, and they became major public events. Such exhibitions show that the visual arts had an intimate place in the Jesuit curriculum from the very beginning.

The education of lay students was the Jesuits' first concern, but not their only one. After the Council of Trent decreed the establishment of seminaries for the formation of clergy, the Jesuits played a leading role in educating a new generation of priests – not only their own, but diocesan priests as well.[24] It was the need to serve laymen and clergy alike that led Ignatius to found the two first Roman collegiate foundations of the Society of Jesus, the Collegio Romano (1551) and the German College (soon to be the German-Hungarian College, 1552).[25]

The Collegio Romano opened very humbly, with an inscription over the door summing up its simple purpose: 'School of Grammar, Humanities, and Christian Doctrine, free.'[26] Owing to that last word, it was plagued by financial troubles in the early years, and moved several times, once because it was flooded out by the Tiber, before finding its permanent home on what is now called the Piazza di Collegio Romano.[27] Its final site was granted to the Collegio by Signora Vittoria della Tolfa, the Marchesa della Valle, who gave her family *isola* in 1560, a property she had intended to donate to another religious order to found a small monastery.[28] The move was ratified by Pius IV. In O'Malley's words the 'apple of Ignatius's eye,' the Collegio Romano was intended from the beginning to be an international institution and the pre-eminent college of the Society.[29] Paul IV (1555–9) granted the college the right to grant higher degrees in philosophy and theology in 1556, thereby raising the college to the status of a university.[30] Under Father General Everard Mercurian (1573–80) the Collegio Romano started holding regular classes in controversial theology, in order to train students through debate how to counter the arguments of Protestants and non-Christians.[31]

Although Jesuits and Jesuit scholastics were housed there with their teachers in a residence building, the Collegio was never limited to members of the order; it was designed primarily for lay students, and also took in students training for the

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diocesan priesthood. Enrolment grew at an extraordinary rate. In 1555 there were 130 professors and students in the college, and by 1556 there were 70 Jesuit scholastics alone.[32] By 1563 the number of Jesuits at the Collegio Romano had risen to 218. Yet the college was straining under severe financial burdens: in a series of letters to the pope, the Jesuits wrote alarmingly of the 'strettezza' of the buildings, which were in urgent need of amplification so that together with the Seminario Romano the Collegio could provide enough manpower to carry out the pope's command, both in Rome and in 'the missions in countries beyond the Northern regions' and 'the Indies.'[33]

The Collegio was set back on its feet by Gregory XIII (1573–85), a pope for whom education was a primary concern and who had founded colleges for the Jesuits in places as far away as Japan.[34] Gregory gave it an annual allowance of 4,000 scudi, as well as the income of the Abbey of Chiaravalle di Fiastra (Marches), which amounted to 6,000 scudi per year.[35] He reluctantly agreed to be called 'founder' of the college, a title offered in acknowledgment of his generosity, even though he thought it more properly belonged to the Marchesa della Valle. Nevertheless, Gregory and his supporters envisioned the college as a powerful symbol of the pope's benevolent rule and his role as defender of the faith against heresy and paganism; its goal was, through education, 'to uphold the Holy Catholic Faith, and to extirpate heresy.'[36] In his rhapsodic celebration of Gregory's papacy, Marc'Antonio Ciappi had this to say about the Collegio Romano:

> But what can we say about the most sumptuous buildings of the Collegio Romano, erected by the fathers of the Society of Jesus, built in the tenth year of his pontificate, with such marvellous architecture, and at such a cost, with many very spacious lecture halls, and such departments, [including] sciences, and diverse languages, with no end but to serve all of the poor, whether youths or children, not only from Rome but all of Italy, and beyond, to make them learned in the languages, sciences, and in every knowledge, and to teach them as well the ways of a Christian with the catechism and penitence of those fathers, who every day show themselves to be more useful and fruitful for the Church of God, and the Christian Republic.[37]

This glowing description, adorned with an engraving of the facade of the Collegio Romano, shows clearly that the school was regarded as a papal institution and that its identification with the Jesuits was secondary to its identification with Gregory XIII.

The German College was the only other Roman college founded by Ignatius. Initially, he had intended to create an institution to house a hundred German seminarians ranging in age from 16 to 21, under the leadership of a handful of resident Jesuit supervisors.[38] Unlike the Collegio Romano, the German College would be little more than a residence, since these students would attend their classes in humanities, philosophy, and theology at the Collegio Romano.[39] The college was officially founded in 1552 by Pope Julius III, whose bull of foundation, *Dum sollicita*, indicates that the original intention was primarily to combat Protestantism, to 'search out the hidden venom of heretical doctrine, to refute it, and then to replant the uprooted trunk of the tree of faith.'[40] The institution began with

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a mere 19 students, a number that increased to about 60 in 1554. Like the Collegio Romano, the German College was beset with financial troubles, and the Society applied regularly to major donors such as Cardinal Alessandro Farnese for a subvention, writing that 'since our Society has not taken on the task of assisting this holy work temporally, but only spiritually ... our debts have built up.'[41] The situation reached such a desperate pass under the generalate of Diego Laínez (1558–65) – he wrote of 'dire need' (*stretto bisogno*) – that paying lay boarders, mostly Italian noble children under the age of 15, were admitted.[42] By 1573 the number of students had risen to about 200, with a ratio of about one German seminarian to ten Italian boys. Aside from the fact that the boys were unruly and the relationship between the national groups was far from optimal, many Jesuits felt that the original mission of the college had been contaminated. An exception was the minister and future rector Michele Di Loreto, to whom we will return.

The answer to the Jesuits' dreams came in 1573, when Gregory XIII made the institution a pontifical college directly under the jurisdiction of the Holy See and assigned it cardinal protectors.[43] It still belonged to the Jesuits, but they no longer had to assume full responsibility for its maintenance. With the bull *Postquam Deo placuit* and an extremely generous endowment of 10,000 ducats annually, Pope Gregory refounded the German College, evicted the non-German students, and restored it to its original function as a seminary. Gregory also reaffirmed the college's anti-Protestant character. Students were required to take an oath of obedience to the pope after six months, and to swear that they would receive holy orders and then return to Greater Germany to strike out against heresy. Another change was that some courses began to be taught at the college to supplement the students' education at the Collegio Romano. These classes were tailored specifically to the situation in their homeland and focused on controversial theology and on Sacred Scripture. Now, in addition to their daily instruction at the Collegio Romano, they had one hour in the morning and a half hour in the afternoon of instruction at the German College aimed at combating Protestant arguments. Even scriptural studies were moulded to fit the German situation, as Cesareo explains: 'This entailed an explanation of Scripture within the context of the errors then present in Germany. Thus, the study of Scripture became oriented toward the particular circumstances in Germany, which gave rise to a dogmatic and polemical approach to scriptural interpretation aimed at refuting the errors of the Protestants.'[44] The final change in the makeup of the college took place in 1580. The year before, Gregory XIII had founded the Hungarian College, with the bull *Apostolici muneris sollicitudo*, but the enrolment was so small that it was merged with the German College in 1580 to become the German-Hungarian College.[45] The German-Hungarian allegedly became Pope Gregory's favourite college.[46]

The Jesuits also took the helm at other national colleges in the city, such as the Venerable English College, which I will discuss in chapter 5, and the Collegio Greco, or Greek College. Although the Greek College was a Catholic institution, it used the Greek rite. It had been founded as early as 1576 by Gregory XIII as part of a plan to exert influence over the Eastern Church, and a distinguished church was built for it, S. Atanasio on present-day Via Babuino, by Giacomo della Porta (1583), the architect of the facade of the Gesù.[47] The college was handed over to the Jesuits

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in 1591. Nevertheless, owing to problems with other religious orders resident in the college the Jesuits did not actually take it over until 1621, and the college was founded as a Jesuit entity under the patronage of Urban VIII only in 1623. Its history and its paintings, therefore, are beyond the focus of this book.

Although a Jesuit institution, the Seminario Romano was a direct papal response to the need for seminaries proclaimed in canon XVIII of the Twenty-third Session of the Council of Trent ('Method of Establishing Seminaries for Clerics, and of Educating the Same Therein'). Recognizing the urgent need for a standardized regimen for the formation of diocesan clergy, the council concluded in this detailed decree:

> Whereas the age of youth, unless it be rightly trained, is prone to follow after the pleasures of the world; and unless it be formed, from its tender years, unto piety and religion, before habits of vice have taken possession of the whole man, it never will perfectly, and without the greatest, and well-nigh special, help of Almighty God, persevere in ecclesiastical discipline; the holy Synod ordains, that all cathedral, metropolitan, and other churches greater than these, shall be bound, each according to its means and the extent of the diocese, to maintain, to educate religiously, and to train in ecclesiastical discipline, a certain number of youths of their city and diocese ... Into this college shall be received such as are at least twelve years old, born in lawful wedlock, and who know how to read and write competently, and whose character and inclination afford a hope that they will always serve in the ecclesiastical ministry ... And that the youths may be the more advantageously trained in the aforesaid ecclesiastical discipline, they shall always at once wear the tonsure and the clerical dress; they shall learn grammar, singing, ecclesiastical computation, and the other liberal arts; they shall be instructed in sacred Scripture; ecclesiastical works; the homilies of the saints; the manner of administering the sacraments, especially those things which shall seem adapted to enable them to hear confessions; and the forms of the rites and ceremonies.[48]

Pope Pius IV founded the Seminario Romano in 1564 for the archdiocese of Rome as a Tridentine seminary, that is, an independent and self-sufficient institution reserved exclusively for the education of future diocesan clergy under the direct jurisdiction of the local bishop.[49] The pope assigned the seminary to the Society of Jesus, even though he was displeased with them at the time and they were far from enthusiastic about taking on the responsibility. It opened with an enrolment of eighty students, and it caused no end of resentment among diocesan clergy against the Society, since their future ranks were being trained by the Jesuits and they were being taxed to support the new foundation.[50] The first doctorate at the Seminario was received by Pompeo Ugonio, the author of the guidebook to Rome, who matriculated in 1569 and published one of the earliest extant thesis broadsides.[51]

Like the German and Venerable English colleges, the Seminario Romano functioned essentially as a residence for students who took classes at the Collegio Romano. These students caused the Jesuits much trouble since the Society was without jurisdiction over admissions and dismissals. O'Malley, paraphrasing Jesuit

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sources, characterizes this disorderly bunch: 'Although they came from the lowest rungs of Roman society, they were nonetheless filled with an overweening pride. They were liars, cheats, ingrates, utterly untrustworthy, corruptors of the few good among them, devoid of any pastoral or religious motivation, intent only upon gaining fat benefices with no pastoral duties attached. They called the seminary a "prison" and the Jesuits "spies and hypocrites," their "jailers and executioners." In the rector's opinion, the Germanico was in comparison a "paradise."'[52] The Jesuits made formal remonstrations to the pope (by now Pius V) to be relieved of their stewardship of the Seminario, but to no avail. The experience left such a bitter taste in their mouths that it was officially decreed in the Second General Congregation of the Society of Jesus (1565) that 'it did not seem proper to accept [seminaries of clerics].'[53] The Jesuits were rightly worried that if they allowed themselves to run these episcopal foundations they would lose their independence, and they also believed, to quote Juan Alfonso de Polanco, that their own colleges already sufficed as 'true and excellent seminaries.'[54]

The Paintings of the Collegio Romano and the Church of SS. Annunziata

The first recorded Jesuit painting commission in Rome, begun around 1565, adorned a hopelessly undersized church dedicated to the SS. Annunziata in the Collegio Romano, a church meant 'for the convenience of those young men from our Society who, having finished their novitiate, were invited to do their studies in this Collegio Romano.'[55] A small three-aisled church with five altars, it was built between 1562 and 1567 on the foundations of what had been intended to be the church of a minor nunnery of the Order of the Poor Clares called S. Maria della Nunziata.[56] The Marchesa della Valle, the original founder of the Collegio Romano, was then persuaded to leave the *isola* and its existing buildings to the Society in memory of her late husband, Signor Camillo Orsini, the Marchese della Guardia. Since the earlier church had already been built to the height of the ground floor in 1555, there was no way for the Jesuits to expand the structure to hold the increasing number of students who were flocking to the Collegio.[57] The chapel was located halfway in the middle of present-day Via di S. Ignazio, on the site of the right transept of today's church of S. Ignazio.

Although the Jesuits got the Marchesa's land, they did not get any money from her for completing the church, and budgetary restraints compelled them to hire their own architect.[58] Construction of the Jesuit chapel was taken over immediately by the Jesuit architect Giovanni Tristano, who sent the elevation and facade plans from Perugia, where he was working on the church of the Gesù in that city. Although he later came to Rome to inspect the site, he was already back in Perugia when the chapel was completed. Construction began rapidly, so that the church could be described as 'già quasi fatta' in 1563; however, work then lagged on until 1567, when it was first used for worship.[59] SS. Annunziata was built entirely by Jesuit labour, a matter of no small consolation and pride to members of the order. We know something about the appearance of this church from engravings and drawings, and from contemporary descriptions.

The church of SS. Annunziata was basically rectangular, in the Doric order,

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with a rounded and vaulted apse and four very shallow side chapels on each side. Hardly a grand structure, it was approximately 74¼ feet long and 41½ feet wide, not counting the side chapels, which were originally a mere 5¼ feet in depth.[60] Girolamo Francini writes in his *Le cose maravigliose dell'alma città di Roma* (Rome, 1580) that there were five altars, 'of which the main [altar] has a vaulted tribune where there are painted the Annunciation, some Prophets, Choirs of Angels, God the Father above, with great variety and artifice, made according to the design and work of Federico Zuccaro, excellent painter; the other [altars] have their paintings made by different masters, namely the Crucifixion, the Madonna, St Sebastian, and St Francis.'[61] From a letter from Tristano dated 1563 we also know that the church had 'rooms above, where there are lattices,' which Milton Lewine surmises were used by students to look in during services without being seen or having to enter the church.[62] These were likely on the college side of the chapel, whereas the other side had open clerestory windows, allowing in light from the street. The facade was very similar to that of the contemporary chapel of S. Andrea al Quirinale (1567–9), which was also designed by Tristano (see chapter 2), and was of a type used elsewhere in the city, for example in S. Caterina dei Funari (1565) and S. Spirito in Sassia (1585). Like the interior of the church, the facade was of two storeys, and was divided into three bays by pilasters, Doric below and Ionic above. The entire facade was crowned by a large triangular pediment with small obelisks on the corners. On the lower floor the door was flanked by niches, whereas there were three windows above, the central one being a Serlian window. In accordance with the wishes of the Marchesa, the facade also proudly displayed the Orsini arms.[63] SS. Annunziata was enlarged in 1580 when Gregory XIII expanded the college itself, especially the side chapels.[64] The church was then demolished in 1650 to make way for the gigantic church of S. Ignazio, which was begun in 1626 by Orazio Grassi and finished only at the end of the century.[65] In striking contrast to SS. Annunziata, which occupied only a small section of the Collegio, S. Ignazio took up a quarter of the entire block when it was completed.

The sources do not indicate whether the Jesuits or the Marchesa della Valle paid for the paintings in the church or the gilding of the tabernacle, but the Jesuits employed professional artists. The tribune vault fresco by Federico Zuccaro has fortunately survived in the form of an engraving by Cornelis Cort dated 1571 (fig. 33), as well as a description by Giorgio Vasari: '[Zuccaro] made a choir of many angels and various splendours, with God the Father who sends the Holy Spirit above the Madonna, while she is given the annunciation by the Angel Gabriel, and placed in the middle of six prophets, larger than life and very beautiful.'[66] A heavenly cloudburst of angels, prophets, and patriarchs, the painting is divided horizontally into two main sections, the celestial and earthly realms. The upper portion, culminating in an image of God the Father and the Holy Spirit, is flanked by rows of musician angels and winged cherubs, immersed in clouds. The lower section centres on the Annunciation scene itself, placed so that the central axis of the painting from top to bottom can be read as a symbol of the Trinity (Father, Holy Spirit, Christ in the womb of the Virgin). On each side of the Annunciation scene are three prophets and patriarchs, holding tablets with inscriptions from the Old Testament that foretell the coming of Christ. In the background, set in a

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generic landscape, are various symbols of the Virgin, including the *hortus clausus*, the tower, and the well.[67]

Cristina Acidini Luchinat has identified two preparatory drawings for the apse fresco.[68] Giovanni Baglione, who mentions Federico Zuccaro's participation in this chapel, also attributes two additional 'frescoes' in the church to his hand, including a *Nativity* and a *Circumcision*.[69] Either Francini or Baglione must be mistaken about the subjects of the other paintings, which were either a *Circumcision* or a *Crucifixion*, and we are left wondering whether the 'Madonna' mentioned by Francini is the *Nativity* mentioned by Baglione. Since the painting of St Francis was an oil painting, it seems unlikely that two of the other side chapel paintings would be in fresco. If one of the side chapels indeed showed a *Circumcision*, it would have had the same link with the naming of Jesus and hence the Society of Jesus that the high altar of the Gesù would later evoke.[70] It would also have meant that three of the paintings dealt with scenes of Christ's conception and childhood, the theme of the entire church.

On the spandrels on either side of the tribune arch Federico's brother Taddeo Zuccaro painted images of Adam and Eve (fig. 33), the former of which recalls in its pose Michelangelo's *Dawn* from the Tomb of Lorenzo de' Medici at S. Lorenzo in Florence (designed 1521).[71] It is remarkable that the Jesuits could hire a man of Taddeo's stature, since not only was he in high demand in Rome itself, but from 1561 he was working at a very favourable salary for Cardinal Alessandro Farnese on the interior of his villa at Caprarola.[72] Taddeo's large shop included his younger brother Federico, who participated in the execution of the Caprarola paintings from the beginning and eventually took the helm upon his brother's untimely death in 1566. Possibly Farnese's role as a major patron of the Society of Jesus helped secure these artists for the Jesuits. In addition to his work at SS. Annunziata, Federico would later work on the Angels' Chapel in the Gesù. Taddeo's contributions to SS. Annunziata of course date from before 1566.

The side chapel paintings survive in title alone (and, as we have seen, even the names are not consistent). According to Giovanni Baglione, the canvas *St Francis Receiving the Stigmata* was by the post-Tridentine painter *par excellence*, Girolamo Muziano (1582–92), a favourite painter of Gregory XIII whom even Alessandro Farnese could not obtain for Caprarola, but who worked for his arch-rival Ippolito d'Este at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli from 1560 to 1566.[73] Muziano later painted two versions of the same scene, one of them for a Capuchin church at Frascati (later 1570s) (fig. 34), both of which survive today. Both canvases show the saint in a rich landscape setting, the Roman version a sombre image in a dark grotto and the Frascati version a brightly lit scene in an open area. The paintings are enlivened by their natural setting, the mysticism and atmospheric effect of which recall Titian, yet their attention to botanical detail also shows the influence of Northern paintings and engravings.[74] Alessandro Farnese eventually did secure Muziano's services in 1588–9 for the *Circumcision* at the high altar of the Gesù, but the elderly cardinal died before it was completed (see chapter 6). There was also a painting cycle of St Francis in the Gesù, placed there partly because Francis Borgia (general 1560–72) was especially devoted to him but also because Francis of Assisi served as a precursor of Francis Xavier, who died in 1552 and was not canonized until

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1622. Since Francis Borgia was general at the time of the construction of SS. Annunziata, it seems likely that he was responsible for the choice of St Francis for this chapel as well. Francis of Assisi also served as a model for living one's life in Christ, since he became a second Christ through his reception of the stigmata.

One final item of great importance in the original church of SS. Annunziata was the tomb of Aloysius Gonzaga. Like that between Stanislas and the Novitiate, there was a close link between Aloysius and the site of his tomb, since he had been enrolled in the Collegio Romano at the time of his death. Within a year his body was placed under the pavement of SS. Annunziata in the Cappella del Crocifisso, and in 1598 it was moved to the wall of the church. Aloysius's cult was given a boost by his beatification in 1605, and in that year (the same year in which Stanislas's tomb was commissioned by members of the Polish nobility) the Marchese Tiberio Lancellotti erected a chapel in his honour and built a rich altar of polychrome marble that still exists in the sacristy of S. Ignazio.[75] Robert Bellarmine, who wrote affectionately of Aloysius as his 'spiritual son,' asked in his will, dated 23 January 1611, that he be buried at the foot of the young man's tomb.[76]

The fresco cycles in the lecture halls of the Collegio Romano were not painted until nearly two decades after those in SS. Annunziata. The Jesuits had wanted to rebuild the existing college buildings from the moment they took over the Marchesa's bequest. The structures already there were far from adequate given the number of students enrolled, and the Society had its eyes on the block adjacent to the south, facing the present-day Piazza del Collegio Romano. With this new parcel of land in place, the Jesuits laid the first stone of the new buildings in 1581, under the patronage of Pope Gregory XIII, the new 'founder' of the college.[77] The college buildings were also a pet project of another superior general, Claudio Acquaviva, who, as we have seen, was responsible for most of the renovations and almost all the painting cycles at the Novitiate. Although the buildings, which included classrooms to the south of SS. Annunziata and a Jesuit residence to the north, have traditionally been assigned to Bartolommeo Ammannati, Pietro Pirri has pointed out that there is no evidence for this attribution and that the buildings were almost certainly the work of the Jesuit architect Giuseppe Valeriano.[78] In the early stages of the project Valeriano was assisted as a consultant by Giacomo della Porta, who would design the facade of the churches of the Collegio Greco and the Gesù, and who was the architect of St Peter's. Like Tristano before him, Valeriano also contributed extensively to the Novitiate buildings. In a sombre but monumental style, which answered the Jesuits' need for austerity in their residences but allowed the pope to proclaim his patronage, the new buildings of the Collegio Romano became one of the grandest and most recognizable educational institutions in Italy. The building was finished quickly, and opened for classes as early as 1584. It had eleven classrooms, in addition to the grand Aula Magna and two other halls for the Marian congregations.

Unfortunately, there is no Richeôme to tell us what was depicted in the original decorations of the 1581–4 college buildings. According to the account books, first published in their entirety by Pirri, the painting campaign was very fast; it began in January 1584 and ended a few months later.[79] Most of the painters were virtual unknowns, with two notable exceptions. The first is the Fleming Paul Brill (1554–

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1626), one of the most popular landscape artists of late Cinquecento Rome, who contributed to the papal apartments of Gregory XIII as well as executing important commissions for Sixtus V (1585–90) and Clement VIII (1592–1605).[80] Another well-known painter working on this commission was Cristofano Roncalli (Il Pomarancio, 1551/2–1626), whose supposed teacher Circignani – confusingly, also called 'Il Pomarancio' – worked a couple of years earlier on the frescoes in the church of the German-Hungarian College, S. Stefano Rotondo, and that of the English College, S. Tommaso di Canterbury.[81] A certain Giuseppe Roncalli, perhaps his kinsman, entered the Society in the Roman Novitiate in the same year that Cristofano contributed to the Collegio Romano (see chapter 2). Roncalli later collaborated with Paul Brill and others on the Nave Clementina of Clement VIII at the church of St John Lateran, and was commissioned to paint a canvas of the *Punishment of Sapphira* for St Peter's, also under Clement VIII.[82] The other painters included Bartolomeo Sogliani (possibly a relative of the Florentine painter Antonio Sogliani, 1492–1544), who was responsible for most of the work and painted a large fresco *Christ the Saviour* in the Theology Aula; Andrea Aretino; Matteo Neroni (perhaps a relation of the Sienese painter Bartolomeo Neroni, 1505/10–1571); Cesare Rossetto; Antonio de' Monti; the Milanese sculptor Ambrogio Buonvicino; and the calligrapher Alessandro de Magistris (Il Caldarola). Another artist working on the project, who seems to have had a hand in nearly every commission covered in this book, was Giovanni Battista Fiammeri, who is mentioned as purchasing paints on 18 August 1584; so too did his assistant Rutilio Clemente.

Paintings adorned the Aula Magna, the Theology Aula, and the head of the grand staircase, as well as other public areas of the college. They included fourteen landscape paintings by Brill and Neroni of the colleges founded by Gregory XIII, with Latin epigrams in labels by Alessandro de Magistris below; figure paintings; and simple friezes and adornments. Andrea Aretino, for example, painted a series of six false doors. The only painting mentioned by name is a *quadro* of the *Madonna della Congregazione de Piccoli*, the work of Rutilio Clemente.[83] Antonio de' Monti, who specialized in portraits of popes, executed a portrait of Gregory XIII, and Buonvicino made a stucco papal coat of arms that dominated the head of the staircase. They are described in some detail in the Annual Letter of 1584:

> At the back of the hall, the eyes of the visitor are attracted right away by the portrait of Gregory XIII seated in a throne, surrounded by a large crowd of cardinals, [and] a large number of our colleagues prostrated at his feet in the act of benediction, together with a group of the most distinguished alumni representing the respective colleges. If we turn our gaze inside onto the walls of the *aula*, we will see the most beautiful images of buildings depicted on all sides. They are the Gregorian colleges founded by the zealous pontiff in various parts of the world for the propagation of the Faith, six on the right and seven on the left. On the right one sees the colleges of Vilnius in Lithuania and Claudiopolis in Transylvania, and three others in Japan, along with the seminary at Fulda. On the left are the colleges of Vienna in Austria, the Illirico in Piceno, and, finally, the five Roman ones, namely, in addition to the three already exant, the seminary of Greek neophytes and, last, that of the Maronites. The

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> facing wall has at the front a view of the Collegio Romano, larger than all the others, and in front of this, on the entrance wall, can be seen another five colleges, smaller in proportion and in works, namely, Pont-à-Mousson [Richeôme's former college] in Lorraine, Braunsberg in Prussia, Olmütz in Moravia, Graz in Styria, and, finally, Prague in Bohemia. All these various images are represented inside the room as if unfolded on a large tapestry, and to enliven them a brief and elegant Latin epigram is placed on each, indicating their characteristics in a few words.[84]

What is striking about the paintings in the Collegio Romano is that the iconography is not so much Jesuit as papal. Although the vistas of Jesuit colleges the world over celebrate the Jesuit educational and missionary enterprise and the emphasis on landscape echoes painting cycles in other Jesuit foundations in the city, the overriding theme is one of papal prerogative and the glorification of Gregory XIII. The images of the colleges immediately recall a contemporary publication meant as a panegyric ode to Gregory: Marc'Antonio Ciappi's *Compendio delle heroiche et gloriose attione, et santa vita di Papa Gregorio XIII* (Rome, 1596), quoted earlier in this chapter, which includes woodcut illustrations of colleges founded by Gregory, such as the Japanese colleges of Usuki, Funai, Arima, and Azuchi (fig. 35).[85] It is likely that these images, which show blocklike structures in a severe mid-sixteenth-century Roman style, were based on the now lost paintings of the Collegio. They also recall fresco cycles commissioned by later popes to celebrate papal foundations, such as those in the Salone Sistino in Sixtus V's Villa Montalto, which included obelisks, fountains, and public architecture funded by the pope, and similar imagery at the Salone Sistino at the Vatican Palace, both from the later 1580s.[86] Paul Brill himself contributed frescoes showing papal properties in a landscape setting in Clement VIII's Sala del Concistoro in the Vatican in the 1590s.[87] Two paintings traditionally assigned to the Collegio Romano campaign, canvases showing Gregory founding the Collegio Romano and the international Jesuit colleges, have recently been dated to 1655.[88]

Pope Gregory wasted no time in making an official visit to his newest foundation, which he dedicated on 28 October 1584. Naturally, the event was used as an excuse for *affixiones*:

> There was a most beautiful exhibition of pictures and compositions throughout the courtyard and in all the stairways. The pope came, saw, and was much pleased with everything: he was brought to the *salone* already painted with pictures representing the buildings of various colleges founded by His Holiness. At the end of the *salone* had been painted the same Pope Gregory with many cardinals on the sides and many young men at his feet with many emblems [*devise*] according to the dress of their colleges, in the act of blessing them, as still can be seen today. The Pope's throne with its baldacchino was set up facing this painting. The Pope departed completely satisfied and encouraged the fathers to begin classes.[89]

Girolamo Nappi mentions the event in his *Diario del Seminario Romano* (1640s): the passageways in the college are draped with luxurious textiles and emblems, and in them Gregory stands and contemplates the picture of himself facing the throne he sat upon.[90] The elaborate emblems, inscriptions, and temporary papal arms

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hung for this occasion are also mentioned in the account book, which lists payments for various supplies such as walnut oil, white lead, and ground gold for the emblems, as well as payments to the sculptor Flaminio Vacca for two papal arms to go above the staircase in the school courtyard, and to Bernardino Passero and Bartolommeo Argentires da Torino for creating the commemorative medallions minted to celebrate Gregory's patronage.[91]

The grand public rooms were not the only places adorned with paintings. Like those of early Jesuits such as Ignatius and Francis Borgia, as well as that of Claudio Acquaviva, the bedrooms of the Jesuits at the Collegio Romano contained sacred images, one near the bed where the resident said his prayers, and the other over his desk. This practice even predates Gregory's new construction, as a reference to the year 1574 from the manuscript *Historia del Collegio Romano* attests.[92] As in all the Jesuit foundations in Rome, art served both a public and a private function. One final decorative campaign at the Collegio Romano took place not at the college itself but at one of its properties. In 1586 and 1587, Fiammeri and Clemente also painted decorations at the Abbey of Chiaravalle di Fiastra, the college's holding in the Marches, at a time when both of them were working on the Florence college of S. Giovannino. Fiammeri made the trip twice, in January 1586 and 1587, when he purchased pigments for the abbey.[93] Rutilio Clemente travelled there in September 1587, bringing colours he had purchased for the abbey.[94]

The Paintings of the Seminario Romano

We have an even more detailed description of how images were used in college buildings for the Seminario Romano. It took some time for the Seminario to find a final home. In the first year after its foundation, in 1564, it was located in the Palazzo Rospigliosi Pallavicini in Campo Marzio, and within the year it moved to the Palazzo Madama so that it could be near the Collegio Romano.[95] Housing the institution was always a problem on account of the sheer number of seminarians: as early as 1567 there were 150 people in residence, 130 seminarians and 20 Jesuits.[96] Over the next four decades the Seminario moved to four other locations, including a part of the Palazzo Colonna near the church of the SS. Apostoli, the Palazzo Valle near the church of S. Eustachio, and the Palazzo Nardini in Rione Parione, and the account books show especially extensive building activity among woodworkers and stonemasons in 1575. It was not until 1608 that the Seminario was finally lodged permanently in the Palazzo Gabrielli Borromeo and a neighbouring house on present-day Via del Seminario Romano, between the Collegio Romano and the Pantheon.[97] The three-storey palazzo had been built earlier in the sixteenth century and included a garden for the use of the seminarians. An anonymous description written after 1622 gives detailed insight into the use of the different rooms of the Seminario, uses that match those mentioned in a more piecemeal fashion in letters from as early as the late 1560s.[98] There were a grand hall, which served for public functions such as debates on philosophy or theology, commencement exercises, public speeches and recitations of poems, performances of tragedies and other plays customary during Carnival; rooms for class meetings of seminarians; and, finally, a chapel in which the seminarians heard mass every morning with music, or attended services on feast days.[99] Music was important in

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the life at the Seminario. As early as 1565, singing lessons formed part of the curriculum, and in 1567 the composer and musician Giovanni Pierluigi da Palestrina (ca. 1525–94) served as music master.[100]

Every month the seminarians were required to receive communion, and every fifteen days they were obliged to gather for special prayers, according to their class, in four different oratories located on the ground floor and cortile level. The first oratory was dedicated to the Visitation of the Most Holy Virgin, and was for the middle classmen. The second, named for the Nativity, was for the upper classmen. The third, also dedicated to the Nativity, was for the youngest class. The fourth oratory was named for the Immaculate Conception and was for the clerics. These oratories undoubtedly featured paintings of the mysteries to which they were dedicated, and the paintings would have served as the focus of prayer and other devotions. The Seminario also gathered for prayer to the Virgin Mary during feast days, for special indulgences.[101] Opposite the oratory of the clerics and under the grand hall was the refectory, which had a capacity of more than two hundred and thus was twice the size of Acquaviva's refectory at the Novitiate of S. Andrea. A grand affair, the dining room was hung with paintings and had an elaborate gilt stucco vault with frescoes.[102] In this refectory the seminarians would dine while hearing readings given by clerics, who spoke from a *pulpitino*.

The rest of the Seminario was divided between the offices and rooms of the fathers, and ten study halls (*scrittori*), eight for the seminarians and two for the clerics. Each of these was named for a saint, and on the wall of each was likely also a painting of the saint. The rooms for the seminarians were named for the Madonna, St John the Baptist, St Bartholomew, St Andrew, St Paul, St Michael, St John the Evangelist, and St Francis Xavier, the last possibly having originally been dedicated to Blessed Francis Xavier, before his canonization in 1622. The clerics' study halls were devoted to St Gregory (the older clerics) and St Peter (the younger ones).[103] The seminary had communal dormitory rooms, each of which had a Father Prefect who maintained discipline and a servant charged with making the beds, fetching water, and performing other domestic tasks. Each bedroom had a patron saint, whose image hung on the wall (as at the Collegio Romano), and every morning the Father Prefect would lead the seminarians in prayer to the Immaculate Conception; then, on their knees in rows, they would pray to the patron saint of their bedroom, facing the image on the wall.[104] Although this information comes from at least the second decade of the seventeenth century, it provides a rare glimpse into the daily regimen of one of the key Roman foundations of the Society of Jesus, and demonstrates how images of saints punctuated the lives and devotions of the young men who lived there. It also indicates that the iconography on the walls was more mainstream and ordinary than the imagery at S. Andrea, as befit its primarily non-Jesuit audience – no martyrdoms, no Jesuits other than Francis Xavier, and no emblematic allegories.

The Paintings of the German-Hungarian College and the Palaeochristian Revival Movement

The German-Hungarian College was the site of some of the most influential artistic contributions of the Society of Jesus, particularly in its three churches, S.

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Apollinare, S. Saba, and S. Stefano Rotondo. The S. Stefano Rotondo paintings (begun 1582) have been examined more thoroughly than any other pre-Baroque Jesuit paintings in Italy, and studies of this supposed paragon of 'Counter-Reformation' iconography are still so popular that they form something of a cottage industry.[105] Having fascinated and appalled visitors long before Charles Dickens characterized them in 1846 as 'such a panorama of horror and butchery no man could imagine in his sleep, though he were to eat a whole pig raw, for supper,' the images of martyrdoms that encircle the visitor to this early Christian church are among the most visceral and gruesome in the history of painting.[106] Over thirty full-sized vistas on the interior walls of the church depict more than four hundred years of martyrdoms, beginning with the Holy Innocents, with unblushing candour, all set against an incongruously placid setting of verdant landscape and classical architecture. Since the church is round and can be taken in all at once, the frescoes present a vast panorama of torture in a single glance. These frescoes depict every imaginable method and instrument of torture, and they catalogue these atrocities with capital letters keyed to text panels below in Latin and Italian. Dickens summed it up best:

> Grey-bearded men being boiled, fried, grilled, crimped, singed, eaten by wild beasts, worried by dogs, buried alive, torn asunder by horses, chopped up small with hatchets: women having their breasts torn with iron pincers, their tongues cut out, their ears screwed off, their jaws broken, their bodies stretched upon the rack, or skinned upon the stake, or crackled up and melted in the fire: these are among the mildest subjects. So insisted on, and laboured at, besides, that every sufferer gives you the same occasion for wonder as poor old Duncan awoke, in Lady Macbeth, when she marvelled at his having so much blood in him.[107]

Even the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814) called it 'one of the most frightening collections of horrors that it is possible to gather together.'[108] Such a relentless catalogue of suffering was bound to leave an indelible impression on the viewer, and the Jesuits, fully aware of the power of these paintings, wrote proudly of their effects not just on their young collegiate audience but on the great churchmen of Rome and Europe. Capitalizing on their visual potency, the Society published an illustrated manual based on the paintings within a year of their execution, and the book was so popular that it was reprinted two years later, in 1585. The paintings have left a comparable impression on scholars today, who have treated them as a prototypically Jesuit kind of imagery, a paradigm for an anti-aesthetic, didactic style of painting aimed at the widest possible audience, one that has even been compared to the visual propaganda of the Nazis.[109]

The paintings of the three churches of the German-Hungarian College are key manifestations of the Palaeochristian Revival, a movement that was given its first major impetus under Gregory XIII and gained special momentum under Clement VIII in preparation for the 1600 Jubilee – despite some scholars' reluctance to draw the connection.[110] An ideological restoration of the era of the Church of late antiquity, the movement aimed to return to the perceived purity of Christianity's first centuries in the wake of Catholic reform. In Rome it was marked by the restoration and renovation – often heavy-handed – of the most ancient of its

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basilicas and churches, and by a concomitant revival of the late antique and early medieval styles of painting and stucco decoration found in these monuments. Cardinal patrons were especially active in restoring their titular churches, such as Cardinal Rusticucci's titular church of S. Susanna, Cardinal Giustiniani's S. Prisca, and Cardinal Sfondrato's S. Cecilia in Trastevere. Some of the most active of these cardinals were the Oratorian Cesare Baronio, whose history of the Church entitled the *Annales ecclesiastici* (1588–1607), begun at the request of Filippo Neri, became the classic text of the Palaeochristian Revival, and the equally learned Alessandro de' Medici, the author of the program of restoration at St John Lateran and at his titular church of S. Prassede.[111] Baronio's early Christian titular church of SS. Nereo ed Achilleo, which he began restoring in 1596, underwent one of the most scholarly restorations of the Palaeochristian Revival movement (figs 18, 23, 24). Baronio filled in lacunae in the damaged apsidal mosaic with painted stucco in a careful attempt to be consistent in style and theme, and even brought in Palaeochristian furnishings and works of art from other sites. He also imposed a precise iconographical program on the facade and interior, including Early Christian motifs such as the jewelled cross and *strumenti di martirio* (instruments of martyrdom) inspired by his fellow Oratorian Antonio Gallonio's *Trattato degli istrumenti di martirio* (1591), with engravings by Antonio Tempesta.[112] Some aspects of this restoration show the unmistakable influence of Jesuit projects, as we saw in chapter 2 and will see again.

Many supporters of the Palaeochristian Revival movement, like Baronio and Medici, were also amateur archaeologists, philologists, and collectors of antiquities who combined an erudite interest in the ancient world with a reformed Christianity, 'in which the values of humanistic culture and the needs of tridentine "reform" co-existed, or were still placed in dialectical mode.'[113] The movement favoured the cult of the early Christian martyrs, such as Cecilia and Susanna, whose martyrdoms were treated as symbols of Christian triumph, and it revered their relics. These triumphal overtones were often quite overt, as when in 1597 Baronio staged a spectacular Roman-style triumphal parade in which the recently discovered bodies of the early Christian martyrs Nereus, Achilleus, and Domitilla were carried in procession through the Roman triumphal arches in the Forum and brought to his titular church.[114] Baronio devoted the first volumes of his *Annales ecclesiastici* to the trials of the early Christian martyrs, the accounts of which were based on a series of nightly talks he gave on the history of the Church at the Roman Oratory; and in 1583 he revised the Church's official version of the lives of the saints, the *Martyrologium romanum*, at the behest of Pope Gregory XIII.[115]

In artistic terms the movement was animated by a desire to re-create the aura of naive sanctity and austerity belonging to the Early Christian and medieval mosaics, sculpted panels, and icons that originally adorned these ancient churches and that often survived only in fragmentary form. The attraction to the primitive style came from the belief that it was relatively unmediated and therefore made the religious message more intense and more iconographically correct than did art in a contemporary style.[116] One major impetus was the discovery, in 1578, of the Catacomb of Priscilla on the Via Salaria, the Early Christian imagery of which, linked to the years of the persecutions, made an enormous impression on intellec-

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tuals and artists in Rome.[117] Not only did they fuel enthusiasm for the early Christian martyrs, but they proved beyond a doubt that the first Christians used sacred images, and they provided Baronio with archaeological data for his writings on the early Church. Many of the Palaeochristian Revival restoration projects began by filling in lacunae, especially in the apses and tribune arches, where most of the Early Christian decoration had been centred. The first example of such artistic restoration was probably Taddeo Zuccaro's apse at S. Sabina, done for Cardinal Truchsess in 1559; it was a free interpretation in fresco of a mosaic panel, parts of which still survived *in situ*.[118]

Typically, commissions of this type would be done in fresco but in the style of Early Christian mosaics, with rigid, frontally posed figures of saints set against a plain blue or gold background. Early Christian symbols such as the jewelled cross, the empty throne, and, especially, the martyr's palm and crown proliferated, as did triumphal depictions of angels, based closely on classical victories, in which the angels carried the trophies of martyrdom and the Passion, such as the crown of thorns, the nails, the holy column, and the whip. Although the style of the figures does not abandon the shading and foreshortening of contemporary painting, or sometimes even the elongated bodies and exaggerated *contrapposto* of the post-Michelangelo era, artists do simplify their facial expressions and provide them with a minimum of interaction and movement so as to give the imagery an archaic and numinous appearance. The prototypical example is the apse of SS. Nereo ed Achilleo, with its martyr saints lined in a row against a blue-gold background in the apse and over the door, and its angels with instruments of martyrdom and the Passion over each column of the nave and recalling the Italo-Byzantine mosaics of Ravenna (figs 23, 24). Another inspiration for many Palaeochristian Revival painters that is rarely mentioned in the scholarship can be found in the Florentine and Umbrian painting styles of the Trecento and Quattrocento; their simplicity, stillness, and bright colours appear in some of the Jesuit paintings. Popular with several reformist schools in sacred painting, this return to the 'devout style' was also one of the ingredients of the Carracci revolution at the dawn of Baroque painting, as has recently been elucidated by Charles Dempsey.[119]

Before the early 1580s, Palaeochristian Revival decoration in Rome focused almost exclusively on the apse and the altarpieces, as we will see at S. Saba. After this date, however, it became fashionable throughout the city to combine these relatively archaic images with narrative paintings in a more contemporary style along the side walls of the church or in the nave above the entablature; the productions usually depicted biblical scenes or episodes from the lives of early Christian saints, set in a self-consciously classical setting.[120] Many showed martyrdoms. Such are those in the side walls of SS. Nereo ed Achilleo (fig. 18), and the scenes of the Passion in the nave of Alessandro de' Medici's church of S. Prassede. Even in these paintings, however, there is a movement toward clarity, with more centralized action, a reduction of foreground repoussoir figures, and a movement forward of the background, all of which techniques indicate a rather didactic and archaizing goal.[121] The artists who most commonly worked on this kind of Palaeochristian imagery included Baldassare Croce, Agostino Ciampelli, Niccolò Circignani, Taddeo and Federico Zuccaro, Giuseppe Cesari (Cavaliere

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d'Arpino), Cesare Nebbia, Cristofano Roncalli, Giovanni Battista Ricci, Cherubino and Durante Alberti, Giovanni Battista Pozzo, Girolamo Massei, Giovanni de' Vecchi, Francesco Zucci, Domenico Passignano, Anastasio Fontebuoni, Marzio Ganassini, and Fabrizio Parmigiano. More than half these painters worked for the Jesuits, as did the Flemish expatriate Paul Brill, who contributed landscape paintings to a number of Palaeochristian Revival decorations.

The majority of the Palaeochristian restorations took place in the late 1590s, more than a decade after the German-Hungarian College's second phase of decoration (that of S. Apollinare and S. Stefano Rotondo) was completed. Scholars have long recognized the crucial contribution made by the earlier Jesuit examples to this flurry of activity in preparation for the 1600 Jubilee, but few recognize that S. Apollinare and S. Stefano Rotondo began the tradition of painting narrative scenes on the side walls or in the nave above the entablature. Milton Lewine proposes that such cycles began with the church of the Madonna dei Monti, the titular church of Cardinal Sirleto, which was built between 1580 and 1582 by Giacomo della Porta.[122] Nevertheless, as Lewine points out, sources show that only the building was complete in 1582, and the sole contracts he could find for the interior decoration (for the two left side chapels) indicate that it was begun in 1584.[123] S. Apollinare, the nave paintings of which were begun in 1582, was the first example of this new trend in Rome, a fact that accounts for the degree of attention its paintings and those of S. Stefano received throughout the city when they were unveiled.

The Church of S. Saba

A typical example of the first phase of Palaeochristian Revival decoration is the church of S. Saba, on the Piccolo Aventino in Testaccio, the first church belonging to the German-Hungarian College to be renovated. Dating from the late sixth or early seventh century, S. Saba had an illustrious history as one of the premier monasteries of Rome in early medieval times, and was traditionally associated with St Gregory the Great.[124] It also had a fountain on the premises that was believed to have miraculous curative properties and was especially helpful in aiding the flow of blood.[125] At first the home of a Greek order of monks, it was handed over to the Cluniacs in the twelfth century, and then again to canons regular in the sixteenth century. In 1573, Gregory XIII gave the church to the German-Hungarian College, and two years later – a Jubilee year – he paid out of his own resources for the restoration of the apse decoration, which included new fresco painting in the Palaeochristian style.[126] Outlying churches such as S. Saba and S. Stefano Rotondo, neither of them anywhere near the college itself, were given to the Jesuits because the churches had ancient pedigrees yet were orphans, without titular cardinals to take care of them. In some cases it made historical sense to attach them to the German-Hungarian College (S. Stefano had belonged to an order of Hungarian monks), but, more important, the pope assured their upkeep by placing them in Jesuit hands. The students of the college probably travelled out to S. Saba and S. Stefano Rotondo only on feast days and Sundays.[127]

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S. Saba was a perfect candidate for Palaeochristian restoration, since it had an ancient heritage and contained the relics of early Christian saints such as St Saba and St Anastasia; and during excavations in 1575, workers discovered two lead coffins containing the bones of early Christian martyrs – just the sort of discovery that was typically made during such renovations, the most famous example being that of the body of St Cecilia made by Sfondrato in S. Cecilia in Trastevere in 1600.[128] The S. Saba restorations were almost certainly the work of the rector Michele Di Loreto (better known in the latinized form of his name as Lauretano), as is recorded in a mid-eighteenth-century reference by Terribilini that mentions Di Loreto's restoration of the lead coffins. Ciappi also mentions that 'the rectors' of the German-Hungarian College directed the restorations of S. Saba, S. Apollinare, and S. Stefano, under the guiding hand of Gregory XIII.[129] Although Di Loreto is not mentioned by name in the Jesuit records as directing the restoration of the church, the account books show that the college spent more than 886 scudi in 1575 on 'repairs of the church of S. Saba.'[130]

Born in 1537 at Recanati in the Marches, Michele Di Loreto was of Albanian descent, born of parents who were forced to flee Illyria after the Ottoman conquest.[131] He studied at the Jesuit school in Loreto, was minister for several years before he became rector (1573–87), and had taught the humanities at Forlì and theology at the University of Bologna, where he formed a close association with the Oratorian bishop Gabriele Paleotti (1522–97).[132] Paleotti, who saw the eye as the primary cognitive organ, was a great supporter of the use of images as a universal language and firmly believed in their didactic potential, especially as models for imitation. His ideas likely inspired the Jesuit rector, since his book was first published at the very time the S. Stefano frescoes were being executed, and since he himself visited S. Stefano on a number of occasions during that period.[133]

Di Loreto himself was a strong advocate of education as a means of furthering Catholic reform, and was especially convinced of the importance of training the laity; he went so far as to fight with other Jesuit administrators in an attempt to keep the college open to the Italian lay nobility.[134] He conceived of the German College not just as a seminary for clerics but as what he called a 'universal seminary,' directed at training 'all states of life; because of those youths who are trained within it, some will be persons involved in the government of their republics and cities, others fathers of families, others masters of vassals, others prelates, and others of different professions.'[135] Although Di Loreto lost the battle and the lay boarders were evicted in 1573, his concern for education can be seen in his painting commissions at the German-Hungarian College. These frescoes also demonstrate the importance for Di Loreto of role models. He wrote that it was essential for their learning that younger students have older students to observe, so that they can emulate their elders' behaviour and look to them for models of the spiritual life.[136] Similarly, the frescoes at the German-Hungarian College allowed students to fortify themselves for their future ministry with images of triumphant martyrdoms from the past.

The S. Saba apse paintings were executed in preparation for the 1575 Jubilee and are typical of the kind of restoration work carried out elsewhere in the city in

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preparation for that event. The apse had originally been decorated with mosaics and some medieval frescoes, which remained in a fragmentary state at the time of the restoration. An anonymous painter was called in to fill in the lacunae, and did so in a generically archaizing style, harmonizing with the fragments already there (fig. 36). The upper part of the apse is dominated by a medieval figure of a large Christ in a mandorla, flanked by standing figures of St Andrew and St Saba, all set against a plain background. Below is a row of twelve sheep, of the kind common in early Christian basilicas in Rome (e.g., S. Marco and S. Maria in Trastevere), who represent the twelve apostles and are shown departing from the gates of Jerusalem and Bethlehem and advancing toward a lamb, representing Christ, at the centre. Below these symbols are the newer frescoes, including images of the apostles themselves, shown in a typically rigid, frontal pose without interaction, flanking an enthroned Madonna and Child. Below this level the painter has inserted a row of illusionistic niches enclosing more standing figures, this time of Gregory XIII, St Andrew, St Michael the Archangel, St John the Baptist, St Augustine, and a female saint, perhaps St Barbara. Unlike the heavily decorated apse area, the nave remained unadorned, as was the practice at that time in church decoration in Rome. A tabernacle was added over the high altar in 1578.[137]

The Church of S. Apollinare

The scholarship is very confused about the exact circumstances of the second phase of painting at the German-Hungarian College, that of the churches of S. Apollinare and S. Stefano Rotondo and of the college itself. Nevertheless, two things are certain: they were the brainchild of Michele Di Loreto, and they have an intimate relationship with the sketches for Nadal's *Evangelicae historiae imagines*. Several contemporary reports, including Jesuit Annual Letters, Di Loreto's obituary, and his own diary, attest to the leading role played by the rector in creating both martyrological fresco cycles.[138] Di Loreto's commissions included the first two large-scale martyrdom cycles ever executed. It was a genre that may have been inspired by Protestant martyrdom books, as we will see in chapter 5, but that took on an emphatically Roman, Palaeochristian meaning in the German-Hungarian College. The cycles' use of key letters, their basic composition, and their generic, classicizing landscapes give them a close affinity with Nadal's cycle as conceived by Giovanni Battista Fiammeri.

It is a sign of these frescoes' importance that Jesuit sources, which are normally frustratingly reticent about artistic activity, discuss this project in glowing and loving detail. Gregory XIII himself paid for all the paintings, another sign of the Church's high hopes for the educational role of the pictures, and Ciappi's panegyric history of the pope's reign speaks with open praise especially of the S. Stefano paintings: 'S. Stefano in particular ... he had decorated completely with noble pictures of the most celebrated histories of the Holy Martyrs of Christ.'[139] One passage concerning the frescoes, from Michele Di Loreto's 1582 Annual Letter, is typical of Jesuit enthusiasm for the two commissions: 'And it is in this way that the great number of Martyrs, and infinite varieties of torments, which are depicted here – and since the painting is of a restrained beauty but very devout –

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have given great edification to everyone, and renown to the College, and there are many who cannot look at them without tears. The Pope continually demonstrates great affection for this work, and is very satisfied with it.'[140] Cardinal Farnese, a frequent visitor to S. Stefano Rotondo, was 'very satisfied' with the paintings, and Pope Gregory 'continuously demonstrates great affection for this work, and is very content with it.'[141]

The unveiling of the fresco cycles of the German-Hungarian College was one of the greatest arts news items of the early 1580s. They were touted as an especially worthy example of Christian devotional art. Pompeo Ugonio wrote in his *Historia delle stationi di Roma* (Rome, 1588):

> And this church of S. Stefano was so magnificently adorned and illustrated, that there was perhaps no church in all of Rome that is more beautiful and pleasing to see. For all of the wall that encloses and encircles the church has been painted with the history of the Holy Martyrs, beginning with the Holy Innocents, the first of them, and then on to Christ, becoming the glorious King of the same Martyrs. Then it is through St Stephen that all the others continue in the path of imitating Christ, following according to the order of their time and the various persecutions of the Christian name right up to our times.[142]

Other sources report that the frescoes of S. Apollinare and S. Stefano directly inspired the martyrdom cycle in S. Tommaso di Canterbury (see chapter 5), and a cycle of the martyrdom of St Lawrence at S. Lorenzo in Damaso in the Palazzo Cancelleria (1587), financed by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese, as well as the choir of S. Cecilia in Trastevere (1599–1600), the titular church of Cardinal Paolo Camillo Sfondrato.[143] These reports are confirmed by another written by 'one of the students in the college,' which also connects the S. Apollinare and S. Stefano murals with those at S. Lorenzo and S. Cecilia.[144] To this list of martyrdom cycles inspired by those of the German-Hungarian College, I would add the series of martyrdoms of apostles executed for the Oratory of the Confraternity of SS. Annunziata in Florence by Bernardino Poccetti, Andrea Boscoli, and others (1585–90), now in the Società Dante Alighieri, as well as some of the martyrdom paintings at S. Susanna in Rome (1591–1600).[145] Another, better-known source in Italian provides few details about the trajectory of influence of Di Loreto's commissions, but is unequivocal that they are the first such cycles ever executed.[146] The manuscript sources also claim that the S. Stefano martyrdom cycle was influential in France and Germany, for example that it inspired a martyrdom cycle painted on the nave walls of the cathedral in Hildesheim – proof that Di Loreto's cycle was successful in hitting one of its target audiences, Northern Europeans.[147]

The first of the fresco cycles to be painted was S. Apollinare, another early Christian church, located across from the Palazzo Altemps, just north of the Piazza Navona.[148] Founded under Pope Onuphrius I (625–38), S. Apollinare was revered like S. Saba because it contained the relics of martyrs, this time St Aussentius, St Eustace, St Mandarius, St Eugenius, St Orestes, and St Massentius.[149] The church went through various incarnations during its early history, including stints as a parish church and as a *collegio de' canonici*. In 1575, two years after S. Saba, Gregory

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XIII handed the church over to the German-Hungarian College, just in time for the 1575 Jubilee. The church became celebrated for its services and music, and was frequented by such luminaries as Filippo Neri, the founder of the Congregation of the Oratory, and his disciple Cardinal Cesare Baronio.[150] It was especially renowned for its Quarant'ore displays, which the Jesuits set up twice in 1583 and which attracted 'almost all of Rome' to the little church, according to the hyperbolic Annual Letter of that year.[151]

Unlike that at S. Stefano, the painting cycle has been destroyed. The original church was severely damaged by a flood in 1598 that also nearly destroyed the Casa Professa, and what was left of the church was finally razed in 1740, when a new church was commissioned from Ferdinando Fuga. A plan drawn in 1632 shows that the original was a three-aisled rectangular structure with a small apse at the end and two small, transept-like side chapels, one on either side.[152] The church also had a large narthex, and could be entered by two doorways, one at the front and the other off the Via dei Pianellari. This plan is confirmed by a description by Ugonio (1588):

> This church has three naves supported by columns, ... pilasters, and walls ... The floor was all done in beautiful inlay work with much variety in the stones employed, a good part of which is still there ... Under the pontificate of Gregory XIII ... the Church of S. Apollinare was very well restored by the Fathers of the Gesù, and brought to that beauty and splendor that is seen today ... The ceiling has been painted and gilded, and the tribune, with the middle nave beautifully painted with the history of St Apollinarius, and the choir above and below, and the organ, and the altars, the high altar as well as the others, all has been renovated with admirable order and ornament. So that whereas before this church was hardly even known, at the present it is visited by many, and honored.[153]

It had a flat, wooden roof, and a very modest exterior, judging by Tempesta's map of Rome and a perspective drawing of the later seventeenth century, fronted by a marble cornice.[154] The altar painting, a scene of unidentified saints but almost certainly including the titular saint Apollinarius, was painted by Durante Alberti, whom we have already seen at S. Andrea.[155] The sources are not clear about the dedications of the six side chapels, but Giulio Mancini has identified three: one was dedicated to the Crucifixion, another to St Anthony or the Confessors, and the third to St John the Baptist or the Patriarchs. Without specifying the names of the saints to whom these altars were dedicated, Di Loreto's diary shows that each of the seven altars was assigned to a saint of one of the different categories venerated on the different days of the week. This arrangement perfectly suited the devotional practice of the students at the college, who on the different days of the week would attend mass at the different altars, of the angels and patriarchs (Monday), of the apostles (Tuesday), of the martyrs, or the high altar (Wednesday), of the Doctors and bishops (Thursday), of the confessors and hermits (Friday), of the virgins (Saturday), and of the Virgin Mary (Sunday).[156] We have already seen this arrangement in the dormitory of the Novitiate of S. Andrea al Quirinale (see chapter 2).

As Ugonio and the archival descriptions tell us, the S. Apollinare paintings

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were executed in the tribune area, which was begun first, and also on the nave wall above the entablature.[157] The twelve panels of the principal narrative cycle were not so much an illustration of the life of the saint as a meditation on his imprisonment, slow torture, and death, rendered in excruciating detail. It was, accordingly, a true martyrdom cycle. The panels survive today in a series of engravings entitled *Beati Apollinaris martyris primi ravennatum epi res gestae* (fig. 37), printed in Rome in 1586 and bound together with illustrations from S. Stefano in the second edition of Giovanni Battista Cavallieri's *Ecclesiae militantis triumphi ... in Ecclesia S. Stephani Rotundi Romae Nicolai Circiniani pictoris manu visuntur*.[158] Also included in the series are four allegorical scenes of Life, Death, Sin, and Grace that were probably not part of the fresco cycle but added in the printed version to enhance the book's function as a meditation manual.[159] Judging from the engravings – even though they are of poor quality – the frescoes were similar in style to those at S. Stefano and S. Tommaso. The tortures are presented in all their variety, so that the saint is shown hanging upside down by his feet, beaten with canes, hung from a rack, and stoned. They are set against the same kind of generic, classicizing landscapes as those in the Novitiate and that will become even more prominent at S. Stefano and S. Tommaso. Nevertheless, the S. Apollinare images are more direct than the later series since there are fewer figures per frame and since they are much larger, generally taking up two-thirds of the scene or more.

A single painter was responsible not only for S. Apollinare and the main series at S. Stefano Rotondo, but also for the cycle at S. Tommaso di Canterbury – Niccolò Circignani (1517/24–1597), a Tuscan from Pomarance (near Volterra) best known by his nickname Il Pomarancio. Circignani was assisted at S. Apollinare by another painter known only as Orazio, possibly the young Orazio Gentileschi, a fellow Tuscan who was already active as a fresco painter in Rome in the later 1570s.[160] Circignani may be more responsible than any other single artist for formulating a Jesuit icongraphy in the Cinquecento. One of the most sought-after and best employed fresco painters of Gregory XIII's Rome, he studied in Florence with Santi di Tito, and his first work in Rome was with Giovanni de' Vecchi on the Vatican Belvedere in 1562–3.[161] In 1564 he moved to Città della Pieve, in Umbria, where he executed many commissions in Perugia, Orvieto, and Città di Castello. The most important is his extensive fresco cycle for the Palazzo Corgna in Castiglion del Lago (begun 1575), which includes scenes of the battles of the Corgna family and of antiquity, as well as mythological subjects; its townscapes, compositions, and even taste for blood anticipate his frescoes for the Jesuits. Circignani's most extensive cycle of devotional paintings outside Rome, shared with the Flemish painter Arrigo Fiammingo, is at the shrine of the Madonna di Mongiovino, south of Lake Trasimeno (ca. 1569), where he demonstrated a fondness for brilliant colours, courtly elegance, and naturalistic detail.[162] His most important Roman commissions include the Torre de' Venti at the Vatican Palace (1581), the *History of the True Cross* in the Oratorio del SS. Crocifisso (1582), the cupola of S. Pudenziana (1587), and the Cappella di S. Francesco in S. Giovanni de' Fiorentini (1586–7). Incidentally, Circignani's paintings at the Torre de' Venti also included martyrdoms.[163]

Circignani's work for the Jesuits in the 1580s may have been the most critical development in his career, since after he finished the three Jesuit series he went on to direct similar cycles for non-Jesuit patrons at S. Lorenzo in Damaso and S.

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Cecilia in Trastevere, and he was also one of the principal painters of the Gesù (see chapters 6 and 7).[164] Even his son benefited from his father's connections with the Society. Antonio Circignani, an artist whose work survives in places like the Volterra Duomo, painted frescoes for a *vigna* owned by the Society near the Baths of Diocletian, not far from S. Andrea al Quirinale.[165]

Baglione called Niccolò Circignani a 'practical' painter who worked quickly and cheaply, and Mancini reported that the Tuscan painter could finish one panel a day when he was working at S. Stefano.[166] Mancini added that Circignani worked in two modes, that of a *maestro ordinario*, as seen in his frescoes at S. Tommaso, S. Apollinare, and S. Stefano, and that of a *buon e pratico maestro*, as exhibited by his work at the Gesù and S. Lorenzo in Damaso. These distinctions presumably referred at least in part to the speed and care with which he executed the scenes, and I will return to them later. Circignani's reputation as a fast but workmanlike artist has led scholars to dismiss the Jesuits' decision to hire him as another sign that they were more driven by poverty than other patrons of late Cinquecento Rome and had no interest in aesthetics. Yet the Jesuits paid him relatively handsomely for his work (at the Gesù he was one of the better-paid artists, and he was also well compensated in the college chapels), even when they could get plenty of free labour from their own brothers or from other, more charitably inclined artists. Brill, for example, worked for a paltry single scudo on a panel at the Collegio Romano in 1584. Undoubtedly Circignani's speed added to his attraction, yet he was no faster than many of his contemporaries working on the voluminous papal cycles, such as Sixtus V's mercurial team of Giovanni Guerra and Cesare Nebbia. Speed was the rule of the day in 1580s Rome. I think the Jesuits went out of their way to hire Circignani for another, equally simple reason: they liked his style.

Circignani's style seems a strange choice at first for images of martyrdom. His paintings are dominated by a feeling of weightlessness and a mystical abstraction from emotion or earthly care. Although full of circumstantial detail, they have a disjointed quality, and they tend to lack the strong focus on the central figures that was so typical of many reformist painters (such as Durante Alberti).[167] Circignani takes the elongated figure type of Florentine 'Maniera' painting and stretches it to such a degree, with long limbs and torsos and tiny heads, that it becomes almost ghostlike (this is especially evident at the Palazzo Corgna and at S. Giovanni de' Fiorentini). There is also a strongly generic look about Circignani's scenes, especially in the faces and poses, which become impersonal through repetition and are almost totally lacking in emotion. Yet it was precisely these generic, universal features that attracted Circignani to the Jesuits, as we will soon see. Another source of Circignani's appeal may have been his association with papal commissions, which gave his work an added prestige.

Work began on the frescoes of S. Apollinare in 1580, when the *muratori* finished repairing and plastering the walls and the painter Orazio was paid for frescoing the upper part of the apse.[168] Circignani is first mentioned in July 1581, when he was paid 60 scudi to paint the lower level of the tribune, below the section frescoed by Orazio, which must have been like a dado.[169] Circignani's final payment for frescoing the tribune area was an additional 20 scudi, received the next month.[170]

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There follows a hiatus, and he does not return to S. Apollinare until May 1582, when he presumably started work on the nave cycle. The account books show that Circignani executed the ten nave paintings at exactly the same time he was working on the S. Stefano cycle, since his first payment, for 130 scudi, was for both S. Apollinare and S. Stefano.[171] He seems to have finished frescoing the nave with characteristic speed, since his last payment for that work was 100 scudi, received at the end of August 1582, the same month in which he received another 10 scudi to paint a banner (*stendardo*) of S. Apollinare for the newly decorated church.[172]

The sources do not indicate whether there were painting cycles in the residence quarters of the German-Hungarian College, which were located in the palace adjacent to S. Apollinare and in its outbuildings across the street, which could be reached by an arched passageway.[173] Originally the palace of the titular cardinal of the church, the college buildings were razed and rebuilt in stages in 1631, 1742, and 1773, and completed only after the suppression of the Society. Nothing remains of the original structure today. There were almost certainly paintings in the refectory and lecture halls, and perhaps in the stairwells, as at the Collegio Romano and the Seminario Romano. There were also paintings in a kind of room called a *camera* or *camerata*, a hall dedicated to a saint in which a group of ten students would meet under the direction of a prefect and assistants to honour the saints of the particular liturgical month, who had been divided up among the students.[174] The congregations and their *camerate* were named after one or more saints – the Camera of Sts Peter and Paul, the Camera of St James, the Camera of the Angels, and so on – and each had an altarpiece at the end of the room with a painting of the dedicatory saint(s). This passage from Michele Di Loreto's *Diario* gives us a look at the feast day celebrations of the dedicatory saint: 'The rooms are all dedicated to some saint, and during [the saint's] feast day they adorn very beautifully his or her altar, which they have in the room, with verses and other ornaments, and in addition, after fasting and other forms of devotion, they call [upon] the other congregations, and after having sung some motet, all those in that room together make penitence in some nearby place.'[175] After the celebrations in the *camerate*, in which they may have recited the Litany of the Saints, the students of the particular congregation would make a pilgrimage to a church dedicated to the saint, and especially to the altar that contained his or her relics. The Jesuits also encouraged their students' devotion to images through elaborate *affixiones* displaying verses and probably pictures drawn or painted by the students, as at the Collegio Romano. Ciappi records such a tradition in the church of S. Apollinare, where during the Quaran'tore the students of the German-Hungarian College set up elaborate temporary triumphal arches and adorned the *apparato* with inscriptions, verses, and other texts in Greek and Latin.[176]

The Church of S. Stefano Rotondo: Paintings by Niccolò Circignani and Matteo da Siena

The third and most prominent church building belonging to the German-Hungarian College was the spacious round church of S. Stefano Rotondo on the Caelian Hill. Erected in the late fifth century under Pope Simplicius, S. Stefano was prob-

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ably built not as a regular house of worship but as a martyrium, as is suggested by its round shape, traditional for martyrs' burial places.[177] One of the most celebrated features of the church was a seventh-century apse mosaic showing Sts Primus and Felicianus flanking a triumphant jewelled cross against a gold background, which I have already mentioned as an inspiration for Baronio's apse restoration at SS. Nereo ed Achilleo (see chapter 2). S. Stefano became a regular church under Leo IV in the ninth century, and by the twelfth century it had gained collegiate status and property at Tusculum. Neverthess, despite being under the care of a canon of the nearby basilica of St John Lateran, the building was abandoned in the early fifteenth century and allowed to fall into ruin. Throughout the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, the neighbourhood of S. Stefano was undeveloped and surrounded by countryside, so the building had the aspect of a country church even though it was within the walls of ancient Rome. In 1545, Pope Nicholas V handed the church over to a convent of Hungarian hermits who lived on the same hill, and they held it in name into the 1570s, even though the Ottoman invasion of Hungary by then had reduced their numbers drastically (there was only one Hungarian hermit there at the end).[178]

S. Stefano was renovated during the Hungarian hermits' ownership, although apparently not in the archaizing style of the Palaeochristian Revival movement. A series of frescoes, discovered only in the 1990s and now almost entirely destroyed, appears on the facade of the church, under the front portico, and may have formed part of a more extensive cycle.[179] Depicting the lives of St Paul the Hermit and St Stephen, it is composed of grisaille narrative panels showing the miracles and martyrdoms of the two saints, with small panels above showing divine approbation from Christ and God the Father. This kind of grisaille facade decoration was quite common at the time, but used mainly for secular buildings such as urban palaces. The S. Stefano facade frescoes were known to early writers, including Mancini, who attributes them with some hesitation to a certain 'Baldassare,' and Pompeo Ugonio and Giovanni Antonio Bruzio, who do not identify the artist of the series.[180] Veronica Biermann has recently been able to date these paintings precisely to April and May 1546, the year after the church was handed over to the hermits.[181] Although the scenes of the lives of the two saints are not martyrdom cycles, they include a scene of the martyrdom of St Stephen that may have influenced Circignani's version of the same episode in his later fresco cycle in the church.

In 1573, in view of S. Stefano's association with Hungarians, Pope Gregory XIII assigned the convent to the newly formed Hungarian College, and in 1579 the Jesuits established a seminary there. With the unification of the Hungarian and German colleges in 1580, the seminary closed and its Hungarian students moved across town to the German College buildings at S. Apollinare. But the church only gained in importance after the adjacent seminary was shut down. S. Stefano was already a major pilgrimage site since it had the relics of many early Christian martyrs, including St Stephen Protomartyr, St Lawrence, the Holy Innocents, Sts Primus and Felicianus, St Catherine of Alexandria, St Brigid, St Cornelius, and St Domitilla.[182] Under the tutelage of Michele Di Loreto and the German-Hungarian College, the church's popularity increased, especially on feast days such as St

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Stephen on 26 December, when thick crowds, including the most important churchmen of the age, flocked there to watch the students assist at mass and recite the Liturgy of the Hours.[183]

Yet people from all over Rome as well as from Germany and beyond thronged to S. Stefano on feast days in the early 1580s for more than just to hear the German seminarians' oratorical skills. The church was soon famous as the site of some of the most horrifying and moving pictures of the age, paintings the vivid imagery and authoritative textual keys of which transported devout Christians into the past to share the pain and benefit from the miracles of the beloved first martyrs of Christianity. It was this opportunity to take part in a pious exercise using imagery that brought popes and paupers alike to marvel, weep, and pray in the church of S. Stefano.

The principal martyrdom cycle of thirty-one panels was the work of Circignani, who painted them in 1582 while working on the decorations at S. Apollinare.[184] Circignani was also working at that time on a fresco in the cycle *History of the True Cross* at the Oratorio del SS. Crocifisso and a commission for Gregory XIII in the Vatican.[185] According to the biographer Giovanni Baglione, Circignani was assisted at S. Stefano, probably with the perspectives and landscapes, by Matteo da Siena (1553–88), a landscape painter specializing in fantasy *paesetti* who worked for Gregory XIII at the Vatican and at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli.[186] Monssen proposes that Matteo was also responsible for the landscapes in S. Apollinare, although only 'Orazio' is mentioned in the sources.[187] In addition to the principal martyrdom series, Circignani probably also painted twenty-four small grisaille panels of the life and veneration of St Stephen on a balustrade surrounding the altar of Pope Nicholas V (dedicated to St Stephen) in the centre of the church, in 1583.[188]

In 1583 or 1584, Antonio Tempesta (1555–1630), a third Tuscan artist who like Matteo was known for his skills as a landscape painter, executed an additional fresco program in the church. The paintings included two scenes in the ambulatory, *Massacre of the Innocents* and *Madonna of the Seven Sorrows*, in addition to a fresco cycle in the first chapel to the left (high altar) of the martyrdoms of Sts Primus and Felicianus and of St Stephen, and a painting in the lower part of the apse showing Christ flanked by the apostles.[189] Tempesta was a student of the Flemish painter Giovanni Stradano (Jan van der Straat, ca. 1523–1605) and also worked with other landscape painters for Gregory XIII in the Vatican in the early 1580s (including the Terze Loggie, Galleria delle Carte Geografiche, and Sala Vecchia degli Svizzeri).[190] He also worked on secular commissions, such as his scenes of hunting and fishing at the Palazzina Gambara at Bagnaia (1582–3) and at the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, and he is responsible for the vast ceiling with *decorazioni a grottesca* in the East Corridor at the Uffizi in Florence (1579–80). Tempesta made a name for himself especially as an engraver, having produced about fifteen hundred prints during his lifetime – including his famous map of Rome of 1593 – but he continued throughout his career to receive important public painting commissions such as the Cappella Benozzi in S. Giovanni de' Fiorentini (1597). Tempesta was no stranger to martyrdoms: as mentioned earlier, he later illustrated a manual of martyrological torture instruments by the Oratorian Antonio

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Gallonio entitled *Trattato degli instrumenti di martirio e delle varie maniere di martoriare usate dai gentili contro christiani* (Rome, 1591).[191]

The chronology of the painting cycles at S. Stefano can be reconstructed from the documents, although there has been considerable confusion in the scholarship. As at S. Apollinare, Circignani's first payment, for 50 scudi, dates from 1581, although slightly later, at the end of October.[192] Circignani is mentioned again in December as purchasing nine barrels of wine from the college. Then, as at S. Apollinare, there is a hiatus before he begins work again on the frescoes, in 1582.[193] The entire cycle was completed between March and August 1582, and Circignani received 10 scudi for each of the 32 panels, adding up to 320 scudi plus extra payments for retouching earlier pictures and other work in the church.[194] Scholars disagree about the number of panels painted by Circignani. Leif Holm Monssen insists that there were only the 31 panels mentioned in Di Loreto's *Diario* and included in the engraved series by Cavallieri, and that the 32 mentioned by Baglione included the two panels by Antonio Tempesta (one of which replaced one of the original 31).[195] Mara Nimmo discovered the source just cited, however, which states unequivocally that Circignani was paid for 32 panels; she surmises that the two missing ones (only 30 survive today) were replaced in the late eighteenth century by the two contiguous panels, *Martyrdom of St Margaret* and *Martyrdom of St Polycarp*, at least one of which (the latter) has the same subject as the picture it replaces.[196] Only one preparatory drawing for Circignani's cycle has been published, a *Martyrdom of St Stephen* in the Gabinetto Nazionale delle Stampe in Rome, and it shows that he did not depart significantly from his original design when executing the fresco.[197] It is also quite possible that this drawing was made for Cavallieri's engraving and not for the actual fresco.

After the nave frescoes were finished, Circignani probably returned to S. Stefano to paint the twenty-four 'little histories' in *chiaroscuro* around the balustrade, for which he received 40 scudi. Nimmo has published two documents in the archives of the German-Hungarian College that prove the balustrade paintings were completed as late as 13 September 1583; one of the documents, she maintains, mentions Circignani by name.[198] Nevertheless, in checking the source, I found no direct reference to Circignani; the document (an account book) merely mentions the paintings, the date, and the amount of money paid, without naming the artist.[199] I have no reason to doubt Circignani's authorship (Monssen also believes that the balustrade was painted by Circignani), but I could not find a source that credits him directly.

Monssen maintains in one article that Antonio Tempesta's contribution to the church decoration dates from 1580, the year Gregory XIII built the balustrade around the central altar; he does so on the basis of a inscription of that date underneath one of the pictures that commemorates Gregory XIII's renovations but does not mention the paintings.[200] Antonio Vannugli is more cautious, dating the frescoes to between 1580 and 1585, the date of Gregory's death; and elsewhere Monssen comments that a date between 1583 and 1584 is 'probabilissima,' a conclusion I too am inclined to accept.[201] One final artist who has not yet been mentioned in any of the literature is Durante Alberti, who received 22 scudi for a canvas 'in tela d'argento' of St Stephen between June and December 1582, at the

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same time that he was working at S. Andrea and S. Apollinare.[202] The amount paid to Durante is so low that the artist must have worked at a charitable cut rate, which seems also to have been the case at the Gesù (see chapter 6).

The painting cycles at S. Stefano have been the subject of several thorough studies, including complete catalogues by Leif Holm Monssen and Antonio Vannugli.[203] The main body of paintings is Circignani's cycle of thirty-two frescoes, now reduced to thirty (figs 38–52). They are essentially a catalogue of early Christian martyrdoms over the first 480 years after Christ, with each panel usually representing the reign of a single Roman emperor. The series starts in the southeast part of the ambulatory, in the first arcade to the right of the chapel of St Paul the Hermit and the Hungarian king St Stephen, and ends in the northeast arcade, directly to the left of the entrance vestibule. Each fresco is framed by two engaged columns or one engaged column and a brick pillar, and above each is a small oculus window. The fresco cycle is punctuated at the centre and the four cross-arms of the church by five altars, dedicated to St Stephen, Sts Primus and Felicianus (a chapel, not just an altar), the Holy Cross, St Clement or the Madonna, and St Francis. There is also a chapel off the cross-axis and next to the chapel of Sts Primus and Felicianus, dedicated to St Peter the Hermit and St Stephen, king of Hungary.

The panels of Circignani's cycle show not individual martyrdoms but several martyrdoms going on at once, so that the landscape and architecture divide the scene into sections, with each section enclosing a single action or group of actions. This combination of several narrative scenes in one picture is a deliberately archaizing format reminiscent of medieval and early Renaissance fresco cycles, such as Masaccio's and Masolino's cycle at the Carmine in Florence (1424–8), and it is in keeping with the spirit of the Palaeochristian Revival. The key letters help the viewer identify the episodes shown, and they are explained in bilingual inscriptions below, in a kind of 'captioning' similar to that which appears in the Novitiate (although there only in Latin). Each picture is also headed with a Latin inscription, above, that provides commentary on the scene.

The division of the frescoes into different narrative scenes and the use of key letters also links them with Nadal's *Evangelicae historiae imagines*, and like Nadal's manual they can be interpreted as a classical 'memory palace,' or mnemonic tool.[204] This connection is no coincidence. As we saw in chapter 1, Giovanni Battista Fiammeri was already executing his transformations of Livio Agresti's drawings in 1579–82, when he was still in Rome, and these drawings would have been available to upper-level Jesuits and, presumably, their artists. I believe it very likely that Fiammeri was consulted by Di Loreto and Circignani when the S. Apollinare and S. Stefano cycles were being planned, and may have been responsible for choosing their vertical format, the segmentation of the scenes, and the placement of the key letters. Some individual compositions are strikingly close, such as the background to fresco II (fig. 39), which divides two scenes with architecture in much the same way as Nadal's plate 2, but in reverse, as it is in Fiammeri's original sketch. Nadal's image cycle may also have influenced Di Loreto's decision to create a series of pictures related to various dates on the liturgical calendar.

Since these texts have already been published in their entirety, I will not reprint them here except to note that their sources vary, including Sacred Scripture, the

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Psalms, hymns, and the Roman Breviary, with the result that the pictures 'acted as a visual counterpart to recitations of the Litany of Saints, readings of saints' lives, and the Roman Martyrology, providing Jesuit novices [*sic*] with appropriate Christian *exempla*.'[205] The appearance of Italian in the inscriptions is especially noteworthy, since it indicates that the images were directed at the general public, who would not have known Latin, and not exclusively at the students or Jesuits, who would have been well versed in the ancient language. These frescoes were meant to have a universal audience, as the enthusiastic early accounts of their unveilings also attest, and they were by no means intended exclusively for young missionaries contemplating a dangerous career of ministry in the Protestant North.

The inscriptions probably also served as punctuation for a procession that accompanied the recitation of the Litany by members of the college every Second Sunday of Lent, when the procession would advance slowly along the frescoes of the ambulatory wall in a clockwise fashion. Students could also honour the saints on an individual basis, privately or in groups, on their feast days according to the calendar of the Roman Church and guided by the inscriptions above. Monssen relates the pictures to mnemonic methods sanctioned in the Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum* and related to classical oratory: 'Thus the martyrdom series displays to the *alumni* a Christian "archaeological theater" to be memorized by natural memory and strengthened by memory.'[206] He also connects the paintings with the 'composition of place' in the *Spiritual Exercises*.[207]

The paintings were ideal for the 'composition of place.' Both Monssen and Vannugli note that Circignani's and Tempesta's frescoes in S. Stefano are marked by a generic quality, and their simplified classicizing landscapes and almost complete lack of symbols or allegories allow viewers to fill in the gaps out of their own imaginations. For example, fresco IV (fig. 38) is set in a landscape of green valleys against distant mountains. The valleys are occupied by figures and classical buildings, particularly a large stadium on the left. Although this circular structure, formed of a double row of columns, broadly recalls a Roman circus, it does so only with the barest minimum of architectural features, providing a kind of visual shorthand for the viewer. Neither the mountains nor the foreground landscape offers further clues as to the geographical location of this picture, other than to suggest that it is somewhere in the classical world, and there is little evidence even of time of day or year.[208] Similarly, the figures throughout the cycle are neutral and almost emotionless, compelling the viewers to impose their own feelings on the scene. In the fresco just referred to, the figures possess an iconic stillness that seems to negate the horrors being portrayed. The two executioners are mirror images of each other, so that they look more like symbols of an action than real villains engaged in one. Their mechanical twisting on an axis and their nearly identical costume give them the appearance of puppets – they remind me of the metal players on a mechanical hockey table. The impassive martyrs and docile onlookers also demonstrate little feeling and look like stock characters or actors rehearsing a role. In fact, the scene looks like a drama acted out by college students, an effect made stronger by the stagelike architectural settings of some of the scenes. Like the S. Apollinare frescoes, these have an aura of piety proper to the

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archaizing style, which Buser and Leslie Korrick suggest might be what Mancini meant when he referred to Circignani's 'pennello ordinario.'[209] Perhaps the most startling feature of these frescoes is that with the single exception of fresco II (fig. 39) none has any overt representation of divine favour, such as an angel with a martyr's palm or crown – a motif that was a standard feature of mainstream depictions of martyrdoms.

The onus was on the viewer to bring the figures to life and provide the landscape with a geographical identity, as though flipping a switch and activating it with an electric current. In these paintings Di Loreto and Circignani step back from the specificity of time, place, and personal identity to allow the viewer the maximum freedom to re-create the scene in his or her own mind. The theoretical foundation of Circignani's style can be found in the *Exercises*, where Ignatius exhorts the reader to translate biblical scenes into the present and thereby turn what would otherwise be a remote episode of history into something alive and personally affecting. As we saw in chapter 1, the descriptions of these episodes in the *Exercises* are equally vague and provide only the most basic signposts for the reader. Through this kind of transformative meditation alone could the worshipper at S. Stefano Rotondo experience for himself or herself the sufferings experienced by the martyrs or the exhilaration of their spiritual salvation. It required the most active kind of looking.

Most of the paintings are divided so that the foreground takes up two-thirds of the picture, including the principal figures and narrative, and the one-third remaining is given over to landscapes and cityscapes *all'antica* dotted with additional smaller figures, sometimes mere stick men like those found in ancient *grotteschi*. Monssen assigns the lower zone of the paintings to Circignani and the upper zone to Matteo da Siena, except for the figures, which he also attributes to Circignani.[210] A few of the paintings divide more evenly in half, with a monumental architectural setting in the background that uses arches and columns to divide it into two more sections, each framing individual episodes like a stage set. Some of the frescoes, notably XVII (fig. 47) and XX (fig. 49), look as though set entirely on a stage, with a classical backdrop, angled wings flanking the scene upstage, and sometimes even a proscenium arch (as on the right in fresco II [fig. 39]) or spectators viewing from boxes (as in fresco VIII [fig. 42]). The viewer's eye level would be at the base of the stage, which sloped upward toward the back as would a real stage. In fact, fresco XX (fig. 49) is framed by a cityscape that recalls the woodcut of the Tragic Stage from Book II of Sebastiano Serlio's *Tutte l'opere d'architettura et prospetiva* (Paris, 1545), which was the first work to illustrate the design and construction of a court theatre. This theatrical ambience helped give the scene immediacy, in presenting the action as a moral or religious *exemplum* and encouraging a heightened emotional reaction in the viewer. Each scene includes the same stock characters – emperor, magistrate, soldiers, executioners, martyrs, disciples, spectators, and so on – who switch identity according to the particular saint's life being depicted.

The costume in Circignani's scenes is as generic as the landscape. Unless they are being skinned, cooked on a grill, shot through with arrows, or boiled in a pot –

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in which case they are shown naked with a loincloth – most martyrs wear a mantle over a long tunic, and are shown either barefoot or wearing simple shoes. Occasionally, martyrs who happen to be popes or bishops wear a *triregnum* or a mitre and a *pluviale*.[211] Female martyrs are shown with plunging necklines so that their necks and chests are exposed, and most martyrs – understandably – are shown looking upward for their reward, often in a position of prayer, and not at their executioners. The executioners wear Roman military garb, usually including a thorax, a short-sleeved tunic, and sandal boots, and sometimes a helmet. Occasionally they also feature Orientalist details, such as the turbans worn by the executioners in fresco VI, *Martyrdom of St John the Evangelist and Pope Cletus*, or even contemporary dress, such as that of the magistrate and his witness in fresco XV, *Martyrdom of St Agatha*. Executioners tend also to be depicted with strongly twisted torsos and exaggerated musculature, and they are usually seen from behind with their faces hidden, a feature we have already seen in Durante Alberti's altarpiece for S. Andrea (see chapter 2). In fact, the exaggerated poses and gestures of the killers serve to underscore the passivity and docility of the martyrs. The horror of their actions, stressed by the preponderance of knives and the ruthless depiction of gore, also contrasts sharply with the inner peace of the martyrs, expressed by their loving gazes and relaxed, placid gestures.

The non-specific Roman architecture that dots the landscape includes exedrae, pyramids, rotundas, obelisks, bridges, and miniature colossea. This sort of classicizing landscape is similar to that in Nadal's Gospels. That is especially true of the frescoes showing small classical towns with rotunda buildings, or Renaissance street scenes ending in an open gateway, such as in the Nadal plate 119 and the Circignani fresco XXII. The large rotunda in the background of fresco XIII (fig. 44) recalls Nadal's plate 64. Even the pseudo-military formations of Circignani's background figures, as in frescoes XVIII and XXV (fig. 50), seem to follow Fiammeri's lead in Nadal's plates 42–5 and 62. In addition to this fantasy architecture there are occasional abbreviated references to actual buildings, such as the Pantheon, the Roman Forum, and the Colosseum, as well as to contemporary palace architecture in Rome. Scenes of gladiatorial battles between people and animals in the Circignani cycle resemble those in the anonymous frieze of the Sala delle Oche in the Palazzo dei Conservatori (1570s).[211] Many of the landscapes, like that of fresco XXII, *Martyrdom of St Erasmus*, recall the kind of ideal Renaissance cityscape that was popular at the end of the Quattrocento as well as Serlio's comic and tragic set designs and views of ancient Rome.[212] The exedra motif used in fresco V, *Martyrdom of Sts Gervasius and Protasius*, is found in Serlio as well. Other backgrounds have something of a Tuscan feel, like that of fresco XX, *Martyrdom of St Agapitus* (fig. 49), which recalls Giorgio Vasari's Palace of the Uffizi (1560–74) in Florence. Classical details also appear in the props of the main scene, such as the classical altar in fresco XXIII, *Martyrdom of Sts Primus and Felicanus*, or the Roman-style tub being used to boil the victim in fresco XXV, *Martyrdom of Sts Vitus, Modestus, and Crescentius* (fig. 50).

This classicizing architecture, along with the way in which the saints are depicted sequentially like trophies, gives Circignani's frescoes the flavour of a classical Roman triumph, whose christianized variant is the iconographic category

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known as *ecclesia triumphans* (the Church Triumphant). As Monssen has indicated, this triumphalist quality is made quite explicit in the text over the first image, which has the words TROPHAEA SACRA, and is also referred to in the title of Cavallieri's printed series of these frescoes, *Ecclesiae militantis triumphi*.[213] Christianized triumphal processions, like the one organized by Baronio at SS. Nereo ed Achilleo, were a favourite activity of the Palaeochristian Revival movement in Rome. Circignani's paintings also emphasize the importance of geography, since despite their non-specific appearance they act as a catalogue of the various regions of the Roman Empire, and in addition they have a local resonance, since many of them are set in the city of Rome.[214] Although for his figures Circignani uses the bright, artificial *cangiantismo* colours common among painters of the later Cinquecento, greens and other earth tones dominate, giving the entire series a pervasive sense of landscape that we will see also at S. Vitale.

One of the most frequently imitated features in Circignani's cycle is the pair of flanking executioners, as seen in his *Martyrdom of St Vitalis, St Thecla, and Others* (fresco IV) (fig. 38) and *Martyrdom of St Stephen* (fresco II) (fig. 39), and it also appeared at S. Apollinare (fig. 37). Although Circignani did not invent this motif, he was the first to apply it to images of martyrdom. Flanking executioners are frequently found in traditional Passion imagery, most recently in Federico Zuccaro's fresco *Flagellation* in the Oratorio del Gonfalone (1573) (fig. 5) as well as in Sebastiano del Piombo's versions in S. Pietro in Montorio (1516–21) and the Museo Civico in Viterbo (fig. 3).[215] The motif is common in Trecento and early Renaissance painting, as in the flagellation panel in the tabernacle doors painted by Agnolo Gaddi (1394–6) at the Capella del Crocifisso at S. Miniato al Monte in Florence, or the lunette in the *Madonna and Child with Saints* (1461–3) by Matteo di Giovanni in the Duomo in Pienza; occasionally it includes four flagellants, as in the version by Luca Signorelli (ca. 1445–1523) at the Museo Diocesano in Cortona. Circignani probably chose the motif because of its medieval roots, and he repeats the motif of the flanking executioners so often throughout the cycle that he transforms it from a narrative scene into an almost heraldic symbol of martyrdom. He first used it in an earlier *Martyrdom of St Stephen* in Città del Castello (1570) (fig. 55), which may have loosely inspired Santi di Tito's *Martyrdom of St Stephen* in SS. Gervasio e Protasio (1579).[216] The motif went on to become a stock feature of martyrdom scenes, in Italy and beyond, such as Tommaso Laureti's canvas of the *Martyrdom of St Susanna* at S. Susanna in Rome or the French painter Eustache Le Sueur's (1617–55) *Martyrdom of Sts Gervasius and Protasius*. Flanking executioner figures are also a notable feature of Domenico Cerroni's (?) martyrological cycle at SS. Nereo ed Achilleo (1599–1600) (fig. 18), where like Circignani's they are often seen from the back, have powerfully twisted torsos, and wear similar costume.[217]

The Subjects of Circignani's Paintings at S. Stefano

Circignani's S. Stefano scenes begin and end with two non-narrative images in which different kinds of martyrs are grouped together to symbolize the universal goal of all Christians: to give themselves for Christ. The first is a scene of the Crucifixion surrounded by male and female martyrs, along with two Holy Inno-

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cents at the base, a reference to the first martyrs, the victims of the Massacre of the Innocents.[218] This relatively rare iconography may link the blood of the first Innocents with the sacrament of the Eucharist at the altar. Although Ugonio treats Tempesta's narrative painting *Massacre of the Innocents* as the beginning of the series, that fresco was executed later and was not included in the printed set by Cavallieri. The final scene depicts another crowd of martyrs, representing both sexes and including popes, cardinals, bishops, and kings, against a background of martyrological carnage on a field in front of a massive city (fig. 52). This painting portrays the Golden Age of Christianity, brought about in part by the deaths of these martyrs, and brings the series to an appropriate close. Circignani's cycle therefore begins with the death of Christ, stressing the christological emphasis of the entire cycle, and ends with the Millennium, when Christians have 'abolished the cult of the demons,' in the words of the inscription below, and the martyrs reign in heaven, having 'acquired with their deaths peace for the Church of God.'[219] Alexandra Herz has noted that the role of the cross as a symbol of triumph is also echoed by the Early Christian mosaic in the apse.[220] These paintings have little directly to do with the struggle against heresy in the North and focus instead on antiquity as a way of legitimizing the Jesuits' activities – within and outside Rome – by linking them with those of the heroic first Christians. As Herz comments, 'The decorations ... are more correctly about the establishment of God's Kingdom by the saints.'[221] They are not, after all, scenes of German martyrdom equivalent to the scenes of English martyrdom in S. Tommaso.

The martyrdoms themselves begin with *Martyrdom of St Stephen* (fresco II) (fig. 39), Stephen being both the first (adult) martyr and the patron of the Church. It is set just outside the walls of Jerusalem, and so once again reminds the viewer of the christological emphasis of the series, made explicit in the inscription below. Federico Barocci may have borrowed the figure of the right executioner from Circignani's image in his final *Martyrdom of St Vitalis*, painted in 1583 for the Olivetian church of S. Vitale in Ravenna (fig. 57).[222] Fresco III (fig. 40), the first of three panels from the reign of Nero, is the *Martyrdom of Sts Peter and Paul*; it introduces the first apostles and also makes a reference through Peter to the papacy and the Church in general. As apostles, Peter and Paul can also be seen as the first missionaries, and so serve as appropriate role models for the young seminarians. As in many panels in Circignani's series, one saint is featured at the expense of the other. The entire foreground is taken up with Peter's martyrdom, while Paul is reduced to a mere detail in the background. The fresco recalls Michelangelo's *Crucifixion of St Peter* at the Pauline Chapel in the Vatican (1545–50) (fig. 53), although Circignani's main composition is much simpler, and Peter's head hangs more passively than in the Pauline Chapel fresco.[223] Circignani later painted a similar version of this subject in the Chapel of Sts Peter and Paul in the Gesù in 1585–7 (fig. 85) (see chapter 7).

Fresco IV, *Martyrdom of St Vitalis, St Thecla, and Others* (fig. 38), features Vitalis in the foreground flanked by two executioners very similar in pose to those of fresco II. Alessandro Zuccari has noted that Caravaggio's *Burial of St Lucy* in Syracuse (1608) (fig. 58) uses the same flanking shoveller figures as fresco IV.[224] In

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the background Christians are set aflame in a miniature representation of Nero's circus, which has been cut away so that we can see inside. Fresco V takes us into the circus, where five martyrs are shown dressed in animal fur and being devoured by dogs. In the background, among other martyrs are the dying Gervasius and Protasius, the Milanese saints whose posthumous miracles are depicted in the Novitiate infirmary and whose cult was promoted by St Ambrose. They will appear again at S. Vitale (see chapter 5).

The next two panels show martyrdoms during the reign of Emperor Domitian. Fresco VI is *Martyrdom of St John the Evangelist and Pope Cletus* (fig. 41), with the main protagonist boiled alive in a fiery cauldron between two Oriental executioners who are similar in pose to those in frescoes II and IV. The composition of this fresco closely echoes Battista Naldini's altarpiece of the same scene in S. Giovanni Decollato (before 1584) (fig. 54), especially in the pose of the saint and the tripod pot.[225] Fresco VI enjoyed a flourishing afterlife, inspiring the work of first-tier painters such as the Fleming Bartolomäus Spranger (1546–1611), whose *Martyrdom of St John the Evangelist* in the Lateran (originally from S. Giovanni a Porta Latina) pays homage to the S. Stefano original, as well as of second-tier artists in the provinces, such as the anonymous late sixteenth-century artist responsible for the martyrdom scene in the church at Settignano, near Florence, which combines Circignani's frescoes VI and XVII. Fresco VII, *Martyrdom of St Dionysius, St Domitilla, Sts Nereus and Achilleus, and Other Saints*, is unusual because the main scene is not the execution of Dionysius but a triumphant procession led by the saint after his death in which he holds his own head in his hands. Perhaps the most curious feature of fresco VII is the appearance of contemporaries in the crowds following Dionysius, one of whom Monssen thinks is Di Loreto.[226] The next panel, fresco VIII (fig. 42), focuses on the death of St Ignatius of Antioch, a saint of special significance to the Society of Jesus since he shared its founder's name, who is torn apart by six lions in the Colosseum in front of Emperor Trajan. Federico Zeri has suggested that the contemporary-looking palazzo in the background is the Villa Montalto or the Villa Mattei al Celio, both in Rome.[227] Fresco IX takes us to the reign of Emperor Hadrian to witness the deaths of a group of saints including St Eustace, who was very important to the college since his relics were deposited in S. Apollinare. There is a detailed rendering of the Castel Sant'Angelo in the upper left that is more clearly visible in Cavallieri's engraving of the same scene.

Fresco X, representing the reigns of Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, is the first in the series to feature a woman as the primary subject. St Felicity is shown bound to a tree and tortured while her seven sons are martyred in the background; once again, her body, nude except for a loincloth, is flanked by two executioners whose poses are mirror opposites. The figure of St Felicity is very close to that of St Agatha, similarly tied to a tree, in an engraving by Cornelis Cort after a drawing attributed to Giulio Clovio (1567), again in reverse.[228] The right executioner very closely resembles the left executioner in Correggio's *Martyrdom of St Placidus and St Flavia* (ca. 1526) in Parma. Another woman, St Blandina, is featured in the next scene, fresco XI, also during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Again with the Colosseum as setting, the saint is bound in a net and attacked by a bull, while in the background

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Sts Attalus and Ponticus meet their demise. Fresco XII (fig. 43), showing the reign of Septimus Severus and Caracalla, takes us once more into the stadium, where two men and two women have been fed to the leopards and lions in front of an exedra like that in fresco V. One of these women is again St Felicity, finally put to death after her torture, and the other is St Perpetua. In the background Popes Victor and Zephyrinus meet their end, along with Sts Leonides and Basilides and the Virgin from Alexandria, who are all shown in the upper zone. Fresco XIII (fig. 44), the first of two representing the persecutions under Alexander Severus, makes an emphatic reference to papal Rome. Its main protagonist is Pope Callistus, who is thrown from a balcony that closely resembles a benediction loggia into a well below. The architecture of the loggia dominates the middle ground and retreats into the picture along a dramatic diagonal like a stage wing. A placid townscape in the background, with a Pantheon-like rotunda building and another round structure, is the scene of further carnage, including the deaths of St Calepodius and St Martina.

The popular Roman saint Cecilia is the subject of fresco XIV (fig. 45); she is shown, a sensuous nude bust with a serpentine neck, being boiled alive in a tub. She is surrounded by the usual executioners, as well as other witnesses dressed *alla turca*. The composition of this fresco is quite similar to that of another boiling scene, fresco VI (fig. 41). The iconography of the female figure standing in a tripod pot in an attitude of prayer is quite old, and shows that Circignani looked at medieval and early Christian paintings when preparing his cycle. An early fourteenth-century English textile version, in which a female saint is shown with her arms outward in the traditional *orans* position, is preserved in an ecclesiastical garment belonging to Pius II Piccolomini in the diocesan museum in Pienza. The landscape in fresco XIV is unusually expansive, showing a seascape and a variety of ruins and towns as a setting for the beheading of Pope Urban, as well as St Maximus and his companions, while Pope Pontian travels to Sardinia in a boat in the background.

A prominent female saint is also the subject of fresco XV (fig. 46), the first of four depicting the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus. Here, St Agatha has her breasts cut off gruesomely while tied to a column that reflects her grace and purity in the way the column in Parmagianino's *Madonna of the Long Neck* (1534–40) reflects the Madonna's. Agatha stands in an elegant S-shaped pose with a beatific gaze, and her onlookers, a magistrate and a witness, are dressed in contemporary garb, including a very fashionable feather cap, which brings the scene into the viewers' present. In the mountainous landscape behind her can be glimpsed the beheadings of Pope Cornelius and Bishop Cyprian, St Triphon being torched as he hangs from a tree, and Sts Abdon and Sennen being attacked by lions. The same basic pose is repeated for the principal saint in fresco XVI, *Martyrdom of St Apollonia and Other Saints*. In this fresco the saint is bound to a tree and has her teeth ripped out by her executioners against a verdant landscape dotted with other butchery, including the deaths of Popes Stephen and Sixtus as well as of St Cointa and St Venantius.

St Lawrence is the subject of fresco XVII (fig. 47), stretched out on his grill in an elegant pose as if reclining in a triclinium. His muscular body is one of the best

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defined in the entire series, and he is also one of the most active of the martyrs, shown gesturing as if speaking to the judge behind him, who sits in a grand colonnade. In fact, the martyr and judge seem to be engaging in a theatrical dialogue of the sort that characterized religious dramas in Jesuit colleges. The half-recumbent figure of the saint is likely based on a print by Marcantonio Raimondi after the Florentine sculptor and painter Baccio Bandinelli from the mid-1520s, and the composition recalls earlier paintings of the same scene by Salviati and Girolamo Macchietti.[229] Behind him, in a field before a Roman city, St Hippolytus is dragged on the ground by four daintily prancing horses, while Sts Rufina and Secunda are thrown into the water and Sts Protus and Hyacinth have their necks run through with knives. *The Martyrdom of St Lawrence* by the Flemish painter Francesco da Castello (ca. 1589) at the abbey church of Casamari repeats the basic composition along with the positions of the key players and the figure of St Lawrence, and Cesare Nebbia's version of the scene in the Peretti Chapel at S. Susanna (1591–1600) also echoes Circignani's model, although he has altered the character of the painting by tightening up the composition to increase its diagonal thrust and by heightening its emotion (fig. 56).[230]

Fresco XVIII, *Thirty Christian Martyrs*, is one of the most crowded in the series. In the foreground a burning kiln devours the martyrs, one of whom, a nude, kneels with a forcefully twisted torso before the flames. Monssen has traced the kneeling nude in fresco XVIII to Michelangelo's *Battle of Cascina* (1504–6).[231] In the background 260 more Christians stand in military formation as they are annihilated by a shower of arrows from Roman soldiers. As if 290 martyrs were not enough, the painting also includes the deaths by fire and beheading of Sts Tertullian, Nemesius, Simpronian, Olympias, Theodolus, and Exuperia.

Fresco XIX (fig. 48) moves into the reign of Claudius, with a novel composition in the foreground of three sections resembling a triptych and thereby giving the whole much more of an iconic appearance. In the centre hangs the tortured body of St Marius, whose rack with its wooden supports forms the divisions among the three 'panels.' As Monssen indicates, the figure of Marius was copied from Circignani's own depiction of his martyrdom at S. Apollinare (fig. 37).[232] On either side are figures of almost the same size of his two sons and his wife, St Martha, shown in gory detail as they are flayed and her hands are cut off and hung around her neck. In composition the 'triptych' part of the scene recalls a Crucifixion, with the crucified Christ in the middle and St John the Evangelist and the Madonna on the wings. The landscape, a pastoral setting framed by two blocks of urban Renaissance architecture, features Sts Cyprian and Justina being boiled alive, St Valentine about to be decapitated, and the deaths of forty-six additional Christians. The gently rolling hills and non-specific architecture in this scene are especially characteristic of the neutrality of Circignani's and Matteo da Siena's frescoes.

Fresco XX (fig. 49) provides a clever counterpart for fresco XIX, since in that last fresco the main protagonist is hung from his arms while here the victim is hung upside down by his legs (compare figs 48 and 49). Again depicting the reigns of Valerian and Numerian, the scene features St Agapitus being hung from a crossbar and set aflame. The executioners' poses are exceptionally artificial here; the one on the right poses like a dancer in a ballet. In the background, enclosing the martyrdoms

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of Sts Christina, Columba, Chrysanthus, and Daria, is a Renaissance cityscape with a Vasari-like loggia in the centre, and, as seen earlier, it echoes Serlio's design for a tragic stage. Fresco XXI, the first of five panels commemorating the reigns of Diocletian and Maximian, is superficially similar in composition to frescoes XV (fig. 46) and XVI, in which a single female saint is shown standing in the centre between two principal executioner figures. Here, however, the protagonist St Agnes stands straight up with her hands aloft, in a gesture of prayer of Early Christian derivation that was popular in the Palaeochristian Revival movement.[233] The executioner figures, here almost mirror opposites, twist around in an especially exaggerated way. Behind her in a mountainous landscape is a circular fortress structure in a lake, the shores of which are bathed in a general bloodbath of martyrdoms of all descriptions, including those of Bishop Anthimus and his companions, Pope Caius, and St Emerentiana.

St Erasmus, whose martyrdom is usually one of the most revolting of the entire company of saints, is the principal player in fresco XXII. Curiously, Erasmus is not shown in his traditionally gory state, with his entrails being wound over a crank, as in *Martyrdom of St Erasmus* by the Roman painter Orazio Borgianni (1574–1616), for example; one would think Circignani would have jumped at the chance.[234] Instead, the saint lies in a box into which his executioners pour molten lead, establishing fire as the primary theme of the painting. Behind Erasmus, his very Ottoman-looking executioners, and Bishop Blaise tied to a tree trunk is another expansive Renaissance 'ideal city' stage setting like that of fresco XX (fig. 49).[235] In this dramatic space we witness the murders of St Barbara and St Eustratius and his companions. Fresco XXIII takes us out of the city again and into the countryside. In the centre of the foreground are two cheerful and healthy looking boys with curly blond hair who stand behind a classical altar and place their hands in the flames without appearing to feel any pain. The didactic message of this scene is underscored by the boy on the right, who lifts his right hand in a gesture used to make a point during a sermon as the executioners and witnesses on either side stare with almost comical expressions of confusion and wonder – a rare expression of emotion. The crowded background contains two saints very important for the church of S. Stefano – Primus and Felicianus, oddly relegated to the distance but directly behind the two boys in the foreground. They share the valley with St Boniface being boiled in pitch, St Vincent on his grill, and St Anastasia on her pyre, as well as the Four Crowned Martyrs (SS. Quattro Coronati) and Sts Peter, Marcellinus, Sisinnius, and their companions.

Fresco XXIV has two female protagonists, each given half the foreground, the one, St Euphemia, sunk in a pit of vipers, and the other, St Lucy, having her neck lanced by a soldier. St Lucy's demure expression as she lowers her head quietly to meet her fate is one of the most moving of the series. The powerful thrust of the executioner's body, with its concave form, contrasts sharply with her convex, passive stance. The landscape is one of the most pastoral in the series, yet instead of shepherds and nymphs there are Christians having their eyes gouged out and being encased in lead boxes, tossed into the sea, hung from trees, and otherwise mutilated. Finishing up the martyrdoms of Diocletian and Maximian, fresco XXV (fig. 50) substitutes these expansive valleys for an overcrowded martial encamp-

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ment where the Theban legion is enclosed by the Roman legions and slaughtered wholesale in military formation. The gore continues in the middle ground, where St Sebastian is shot through with arrows, twelve Christians are fed to the lions and other carnivores, and, on the left, a pile of corpses includes the bodies of Sts Cosmas and Damian, Pantaleon, Tiburtius, Susanna, Gorgonius, Adrian, and their companions, among them a mother whose cadaver still holds the body of her dead child. The foreground presents the unappetizing spectacle of Sts Vitus, Modestus, and Crescentius being boiled alive in lead in a giant cauldron that resembles one of the tubs from the Baths of Caracalla now in front of the Palazzo Farnese. We can just make out the heads of these unfortuate souls, who are being stirred in a steaming brew that resembles a giant pot of stew.

The next few panels move into the Middle East and Africa. Fresco XXVI moves on to the reign of Maxentius and to one of the most beloved of the saints depicted in the series, St Catherine of Alexandria. She kneels at prayer, flanked by the two broken halves of her wheel and by five executioners who surround her on all sides with menacingly twisted poses. Behind them rises the city of Alexandria, with its pyramids, obelisks, and circular Vesta temple.[236] Within the walls of this Egyptian city the fifty philosophers she had converted are burned on a pyre, and Pope Marcellus and Sts Faustina and Porphyrus lie dead or dying in the streets. The next panel, fresco XXVII, depicting the reigns of Licinius and Maximinus, takes us from Egypt to Persia. The fresco shows a scene of general carnage so overwhelming that it recalls photographs of concentration camps at the end of the Second World War. Heaps of corpses fill the valleys from the furthest horizon to the foreground, including sixteen thousand martyrs together with Bishop Simeon and Bishop Peter of Alexandria, many of whom are dressed in Orientalist garb. In the foreground an anonymous Christian martyr is hacked to pieces by a powerful Asian figure wielding a machete. Perhaps the best known fresco of the S. Stefano Rotondo cycle is fresco XXVIII (fig. 51), which takes us to Antioch and the reign of Julian the Apostate and Valens. The panel features four mutilated corpses laid out in the foreground, the first two beheaded (Sts John and Paul, martyrs), the third with her throat gored (St Bibiana), and the fourth (St Artemius) being compressed between two slabs of stone, with blood oozing all over and his eyeballs hanging from his head by sinews. As if this were not enough slaughter, the classical city in the background serves as a setting for St Pigmenius being drowned, the bodies of unnamed dead Christians, and, most spectacularly, a ship filled with eighty Christians being set aflame on the high seas.

The penultimate panel, fresco XXIX, is the last narrative scene of the series, and takes us into Africa long after Christianity had been accepted by the Roman Empire, during the reign of Hunneric, king of the Vandals (477–84). What is interesting here is that the series has deliberately avoided showing the more celebrated and positive event of Constantine's conversion, a scene that appears in the S. Tommaso series, and instead has moved into the realm of a man who is clearly labelled in the text below as a 'heretic' (Valens too is called a heretic). It is also the first scene that labels the protagonists not as 'Christians' but as 'Catholics.' Although none of the scholarship has yet remarked on it, this is the only picture in the series with an explicitly anti-Protestant message. In the foreground we see two

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groups of martyrs, those on the left having their right hands hacked off and those on the right their tongues ripped out. The demure expression of the woman on the left submitting peacefully to her fate is very close to that of St Lucy in fresco XXIV. The executioner on the right throws himself into his task with gusto, as Monssen notes: 'There is a twinkle of amazement in his eyes as he performs his gruesome task.'[237] In the background the heretic African emperor and his armies attack thousands of Christians on the plain. The emperor on his horse closely resembles the statue of Marcus Aurelius on the Capitoline.[238] One of the two missing frescoes survives in Cavallieri's printed edition. Originally fresco XII in the series, representing the reign of Marcus Antonius Verus, it depicts the martyrdom of Sts Polycarp, Justin, Victor, and others. The main composition, showing Polycarp bound to a tree that has been set aflame, and flanked by his two tormentors, is very close to that of fresco X (fig. 43).

The Church of S. Stefano Rotondo: Paintings by Antonio Tempesta

Although the Circignani cycle at S. Stefano enjoyed a considerable legacy in Rome and beyond, its most immediate progeny was Antonio Tempesta's series in the chapel of Sts Primus and Felicianus in the same church. Executed only two or three years after the thirty-two panels in the main ambulatory, Tempesta's frescoes followed the lives and trials of two individual martyrs in greater detail than was devoted to any other saint in the church except for St Stephen himself. Tempesta's contribution also included two new panels in the ambulatory, *Massacre of the Innocents* (fig. 60) and *Madonna of the Seven Sorrows* (fig. 59), both of which were restricted in size to accommodate a door in the one case and a window grate in the other. The first of these subjects allowed the artist to indulge in a scene that traditionally was depicted with exceptional violence and horror.

The brutal tone of *Massacre of the Innocents* is set by a pair of sharp parallel knives at the centre, which are echoed by others behind, almost all of them pointed in the same direction. Antonio Vannugli traces the central foreground group to the Marcantonio Raimondi print of the subject after Raphael, and relates the architectural setting – which is far more monumental and dramatically foreshortened than those of Circignani – to a prototype diffused by Florentine artists of the circle of Vasari in the 1560s and 1570s.[239] Tempesta's panel also produced offspring, including two later versions of the scene by Circignani, one of which is in the Nativity Chapel of the Gesù (fig. 88) (see chapter 7). Another version very similar in its configuration is the one by Giovanni Battista Pozzo in the Sixtine Chapel at S. Maria Maggiore (1587) (fig. 61), which copies the central foreground figures of the mother and child and the left executioner almost exactly.[240] Even Guido Reni's celebrated version of the scene (1610) shares some noteworthy features with the Tempesta fresco, including the triangular empty space in the centre, which is similarly punctuated by knives, and the pose of the male executioner on the left. Antonio Tempesta may himself have painted another version of the *Massacre of the Innocents* in the later 1570s at the Vatican Loggia II; however, the composition and most of the figures in that work are quite different from those in his S. Stefano version.[241]

The purely iconic *Madonna of the Seven Sorrows* (fig. 59) creates a powerful

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contrast to the emphatically narrative *Innocents*. The subject is derived from the cult of the Fifteen Mysteries, at that time widely popular in Europe. The Virgin is shown pierced by swords and surrounded by medallions representing scenes from Christ's life and passion. A very similar version of the icon, popularized especially by Northern printmakers such as Hieronymus Wierix, was painted along with *Madonna of the Seven Joys* by the Flemish painter Bernart van Orley (ca. 1492–1541/2).[242] A Latin verse inscription under Tempesta's fresco indicates that the role of the icon in this church is to serve as a symbol of Mary as Queen of Martyrs (as in the St Andrew, or Martyrs', Chapel in the Gesù), and the inclusion of the medallions of scenes from the Passion underscores the christological basis of the martyrdom scenes elsewhere in the church.

The remaining paintings by Tempesta at S. Stefano are the series of the life and martyrdom of Sts Primus and Felicianus in their chapel, which is also the high altar and incorporates the Early Christian mosaic of the jewelled cross flanked by the figures of the two martyrs. The cycle of ten panels begins on the left with *Funeral Procession of Sts Primus and Felicianus* (fig. 62). This crowded scene features the bodies of the two saints being carried on a bier by men dressed as Roman soldiers and accompanied by acolytes holding tapers, while a parade of paired churchmen, also holding tapers, leads far into the valley beyond. The scene is dominated by a luxurious landscape framed by two wooded hills, and the ground is strewn with wildflowers. In general, Tempesta's landscapes are richer, darker, and more detailed than the sketchier settings by Matteo da Siena in Circignani's cycle. The direction of the procession and the prominence of the landscape recalls an earlier painting possibly by Tempesta at the Galleria delle Carte Geographiche in the Vatican, *Appearance of St Michael in Mount Garganus* (late 1570s), and also resembles other contemporary processional scenes, such as those relating to the Madonna della Quercia by Baldassare Croce in the Palazzo dei Priori in Viterbo (after 1581).[243] Monssen has pointed out how close Tempesta's integration of procession and landscape is to Nadal's plate 151, showing the burial of the Virgin Mary.[244]

Tempesta's depiction of the funeral procession ultimately recalls the triumphal parades of imperial Rome, a motif that was embraced by the Palaeochristian Revival movement and made part of the dedication and consecration ceremonies of churches, as well as of the Corpus Domini or Corpus Christi procession, which had been introduced in Italy in the fifteenth century.[245] One Jesuit image strikingly close to Tempesta's scene is the 1584 print *Translation of Sts Abundius and Abundantius to the Church of the Gesù*, published in a book on the lives of those early Christian martyrs, which shows the same configuration of paired ecclesiastics holding tapers and the remains of the saints being carried on a similar bier (see chapter 6).[246] As the first painting encountered by the visitor in the chapel of Sts Primus and Felicianus, the funeral scene leads the viewer on a mental procession through the fresco cycle, with the actual relics of the saints at the altar as its goal, together with the messianic image of the jewelled cross in the apse vault. This procession is especially appropriate for S. Stefano, since the translation of the relics of those two martyrs by Pope Theodore I (d. 649) to S. Stefano marked the first time in recorded history that the bones of martyrs were reburied within the walls of Rome.[247]

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The next panel, perhaps the weakest of the series, shows Primus and Felicianus in the Colosseum, surrounded by lions. The composition, with the two kneeling saints in the pit and an exedra-like structure in the background, is derived from Circignani's frescoes V, VIII (fig. 42), XI, and XII, although the architecture is simplified to the extreme, and the lions, who according to the story did no harm to their prey, look more like pussy cats. Tempesta shares Circignani's fondness for crowd scenes, as in the mob thronging the top of the exedra. The next panel, *St Primus Tortured with Boiling Lead*, takes us back into the countryside, with a long vista of hills, a castle, herds of sheep, and a bay. The costumes of the figures, as well as the pose of the executioner on the right, also recall Circignani's prototypes. *Sts Primus and Felicanus Consoled by an Angel*, in which the two protagonists languish on the floor on the left and witness a brilliant backlit vision of an angel, evokes Raphael's *Liberation of St Peter from Prison* (1513) in the Stanza d'Eliodoro in the Vatican.

The next scene, *St Felicianus Nailed to a Tree for Three Days*, also follows Circignani closely, by reproducing the basic composition of fresco XIX (fig. 48), with its central figure of a man tied to a frame, and by showing a figure virtually identical to that in the earlier fresco. Circignani had used the same composition in his S. Apollinare series, as we have seen. Likewise, *Sts Primus and Felicianus Beaten with Rods*, the next narrative panel in the series, is very close to Circignani's fresco X, of St Felicity, in which there is also a central figure (Tempesta's has two) bound to a treetrunk while two flanking executioners strike her with branches. Tempesta somewhat incongruously has added the upper half of a repoussoir figure to the lower left corner of his panel.

Circignani's fresco XIX (fig. 48) is evoked once again in Tempesta's next panel, *St Primus Burned Alive*, which has the same central figure and wooden gibbet. *Beheading of Sts Primus and Felicianus* (fig. 63) is also in the Circignani mode, although the duality of his subject enables Tempesta cleverly to invert Circignani's standard motif and have a pair of victims flanking the executioner. The final narrative scene, *Sts Primus and Felicianus Thrown to the Bears*, repeats the formula of the second panel, in which they are thrown to the lions. Here the architecture, while still very simplified, is closer to a specific Circignani prototype – fresco V; but Tempesta lowers the line of vision and so makes the exedra more monumental, and it bears a closer resemblance to a real Colosseum than the miniature and out-of-scale structure in Circignani's painting. The scene is also very close to *Exposure to Dogs and Wild Animals*, Tempesta's own illustration for Gallonio's catalogue of martyrdoms.[248]

Aside from a handful of trompe l'oeil angel figures, the only other fresco by Tempesta is a long horizontal apse painting depicting standing martyrs flanking the figure of Christ as Salvator Mundi. Placed directly below the apse vault with its Early Christian jewelled cross, Tempesta's painting unites the main themes of the church: the triumph of the martyrs, their submission to Christ, and the Golden Age. The painting is done in the style of the early Gregory XIII–era Palaeochristian Revival, with iconic, stationary figures standing frontally before an empty background, and resembles the earlier saints' frieze at S. Saba. Herz has shown that this combination of jewelled cross and parade of martyr saints inspired the apse vault painting at SS. Nereo ed Achilleo (fig. 23) and may also have inspired a long fresco

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over the main doorway showing six martyrs crowned in heaven.[249] In keeping with the church's function as a chapel for an all-male college, the S. Stefano apse fresco is made up almost entirely of men, whereas the version at SS. Nereo ed Achilleo has an equal number of male and female martyrs, divided into the left and right halves of the panel.

The Church of S. Stefano Rotondo: The Balustrade

The final series of frescoes to be undertaken at S. Stefano was the set of twenty-four 'little histories' (1583) that adorned the octagonal balustrade around the central altar and are probably by Circignani.[250] In contrast to his large and colourful main cycle, the balustrade series takes the form of small horizontal panels painted in grisaille, or *chiaroscuro*. The action takes place primarily in the foreground, with figures lined up in the manner of a classical sculpture frieze, like the decoration of a Roman sarcophagus. The background scenes are reduced to a minimum and hardly resemble the expansive vistas provided by Matteo da Siena in the main series. The panels are enclosed in stucco frames and flanked by stucco relief carvings with twenty standing figures of individual saints, which Mara Nimmo attributes to Giovanni Jacopo de' Negri, a *stuccatore* who had worked with Circignani at S. Apollinare two years earlier.[251] Because of the size and technique of the frescoes, the figures are very sketchy, although lively in their simplicity. In Cinquecento Rome, rows of *chiaroscuro* panels framed by stucco or false stucco carvings and alternating with standing figures were typically found on the dado level of a wall – for example, Perino del Vaga's caryatids and battle scenes at the lower level of Raphael's frescoes in the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican, painted under Paul III (1534–49). The S. Stefano balustrade is adorned with two separate cycles, one on the outside and one on the inside, both of which run clockwise and have two scenes per wall.

Both the interior and the exterior cycles illustrate the life and death of the dedicatory saint, St Stephen, and identify each scene with text. As is typical of Jesuit painting cycles in Rome at the time, each has been calibrated to appeal to a different audience. The exterior side, seen by the congregation, shows more traditional scenes taken from the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 6:8–15; 7:54–60; 8:2), with quotations from scripture. These include Stephen's election to the diaconate, his miracles, the dispute in the synagogue, Stephen taken before the council, his confutation, the anger of the priests, the ecstasy of Stephen, the attack on him, the stoning of Stephen, his asking for clemency from God for his attackers, his death, and his entombment. By contrast, the interior cycle, seen only by the clergy, uses less orthodox sources that would have been appreciated by relatively learned viewers. The scenes depict Stephen's miracles after death, including the one involving Lucian, who had Stephen's grave indicated by the Jewish rabbi Gamaliel; the exhumation of his corpse; the healing of the sick through his intercession; the translation of his body to Jerusalem; the miracle of the temple saved from fire; the prediction of the birth of Stephen I of Hungary; and other miracles – the blind woman restored to sight, the dead man revived, Euchario brought back to life, a girl brought back to life, a boy restored to life after being killed by a cart, and Paul and Palladia cured of the tremors. The sources for these stories include Augus-

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tine's *De civitate Dei*, which we encounter in Room Eleven of the Novitiate infirmary, also meant for a clerical audience.

Monssen, who has published a study of the textual sources of the balustrade, comments that these more eclectic interior scenes 'are supplementary, and suitably accompany the celebration of the Mass and the distribution of the sacrament.'[252] Several of the scenes are unique in Italy, and one draws a connection between the martyr St Stephen and St Stephen, king of Hungary, an appropriate gesture given that the German-Hungarian College was assigned in part to students from that country. The stucco saints' panels include several of the saints illustrated in the main panels, such as St Stephen, Sts Primus and Felicianus, St Agnes, St Catherine of Alexandria, St Lawrence, St Cecilia, and St Erasmus. Their style is classical but very simplified and plain, in keeping with the generic quality of the main fresco series.

The S. Stefano frescoes of Circignani and Tempesta were soon made familiar to the widest spectrum of Catholics in Italy and abroad, thanks to the almost immediate publication of the printed copies, mentioned earlier, by the Roman engraver Giovanni Battista Cavallieri (1525–1601) and the book by the Oratorian scholar Antonio Gallonio.[253] These publications allowed artists around the world to use the Jesuit martyrdom cycles as copybooks for their own work, and we have already had a glimpse of some of their progeny. We can get an idea of how broadly these books were diffused when we realize that in the 1590s there was already a copy of one of Cavallieri's volumes in Northern India.[254] Finally, the Tempesta frescoes in the chapel of Sts Primus and Felicianus were published in *SS Martyrum certamina in templo S. Stephani in Caeli Monte visuntur expressa* (Rome, 1591), a work by Gallonio, with whom Tempesta also collaborated on the manual of martyrological instruments.

It was no accident that these books enjoyed such wide circulation. Unlike the frescoes themselves, they were meant to address a 'Counter-Reformation' audience in the strictest sense of the word. If the frescoes were more a statement of Catholic triumphalism, the books served primarily as anti-Protestant propaganda and were therefore distributed with particular zeal in the North. Kristin Noreen has shown that Cavallieri's first volume included four allegories that were not in the original frescoes – the S. Stefano paintings included little in the way of symbols or allegories.[255] She suggests that these allegories (of Life, Death, Sin, and Grace) were chosen because they substantiated religious ideology that was being attacked by Protestants, and concludes that the books were meant primarily for missionaries on the front lines, in the North of Europe. Another clue is provided by the long inscription that accompanies Cavallieri's print of fresco XXXI (fig. 52) but is absent in the S. Stefano original. The text is in Latin, the lingua franca of Catholicism, and does not include the Italian vernacular found in the fresco cycle. A long eulogy to martyrdom, it expressly mentions England, Germany, and Eastern Europe, whereas the S. Stefano inscriptions are entirely embedded in the classical past. It was only in the printed versions of these images – much better known than their painted models – that their message with respect to contemporary martyrdom in the face of heresy became explicit.

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